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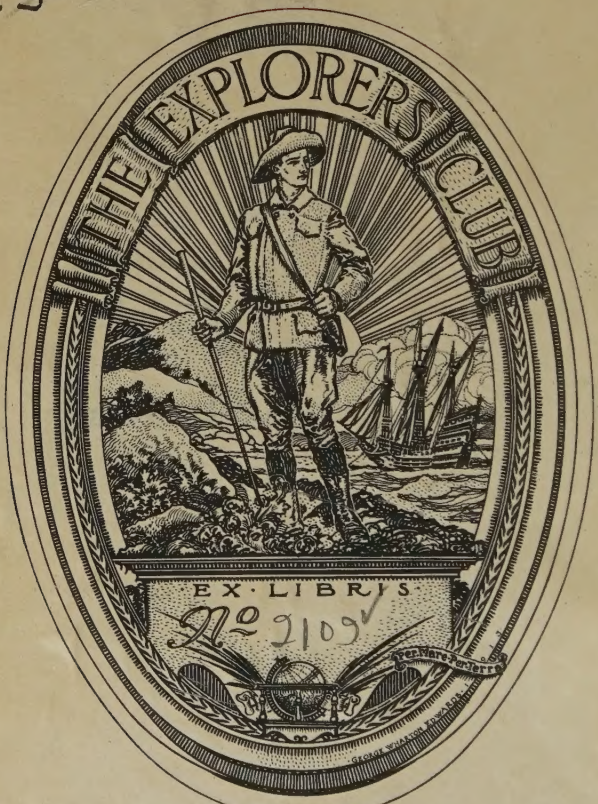

James B. Ford

SPORT AND FOLKLORE IN THE HIMALAYA

MARKHOR.

LONDON. EDWARD ARNOLD.

SPORT & FOLKLORE IN THE HIMALAYA

BY
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(36TH SIKHS)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
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PREFACE

How many books, good, bad, and indifferent, have already been written on sport and travel in Kashmir, I wonder? Such a prodigious number at any rate, that one naturally thinks twice about adding another to the already large collection. However, it has been my custom to keep a diary illustrated with rough sketches and photos, and, moreover, there are many wet days in camp to be "got through," and long hours to be spent on the hillside waiting for an evening stalk, during which one may sketch and scribble notes. It was the suggestion of kind friends who took an interest in these notes and diaries that finally persuaded me to put them into book form.

With regard to the object of the book, I will only say that if it proves to be of any assistance to anyone shooting in Kashmir, and helps him to appreciate to the full the beauties and mysteries of Nature in the mountains, thus feeling the fascination and experiencing the almost indescribable joy which they never fail to afford me, I shall consider the object of the book achieved.

Most of the folklore stories are the outcome of long talks with shikaris, and even the most "jungly" of coolies, on the hillside or over the camp fire. As far as shikar is concerned, far be it from me to say that this or that is the correct way to do a thing. Each sportsman must first of all have the love of it born in him, after which he

must please himself, and learn by his own experience. What suits me may not suit him, and at most it can be hoped that from the record of some of my experiences he may learn enough to base his own upon.

Animals vary as much in individual character as human beings do, and it is impossible to say exactly what any given animal may do in certain circumstances, though experience teaches us more or less what to expect. For the most part only the broadest of general rules can be laid down, and even these are not infallible. Likewise it is not pretended for a moment that anything in this book is infallible. The reader must take everything for what he considers it to be worth, and can then prove for himself the correctness, or the reverse, of the conclusions drawn by me.

Only one piece of advice will I presume to give, with the assured feeling that I am absolutely correct, and that is, learn the language of the country you are going to shoot in, or at least some common language in which you can converse with the natives. It will not only add to your own pleasure, but will also make everything cent. per cent. easier for you.

H. L. H.

September 1913,

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Tales of Fair Kashmir	1
II.	The Legend of Aishmukam	11
III.	Off the Beaten Track	17
IV.	Bits about Bears	22
V.	Some Pages from the Life Story of a Bear	53
VI.	The "Honk"	68
VII.	A Jungle Tragedy	75
VIII.	Retribution	79
IX.	Beyond the Vale	89
X.	How the Rajahs of Astor came from Baltistan	106
XI.	The Story of Trangphalio the Hunter	111
XII.	Markhor	117
XIII.	The Mountain Sheep	141
XIV.	Over the Indus	154
XV.	A Gilgit Jalsa	166
XVI.	Gilgiti Legends—	
	I. How Soglio the Dainyal saved the People but lost His own Life	178
XVII.	Gilgiti Legends (*continued*)—	
	II. Shamsher the Fairy Prince from Skardu	184
XVIII.	Gilgiti Legends (*continued*)	
	III. Su Malik Ra of Gilgit	192

CHAP. PAGE

XIX. Gilgiti Legends (*continued*)

IV. "Mālé Kāré Pūchete" 199

XX. Gilgiti Legends (*continued*)—

V. How the dying Alexander consoled his Mother 205

XXI. Hunza and Nagar 210

XXII. Ibex 238

XXIII. A Day on a Kashmir Trout Stream . . . 257

XXIV. The Call of the Chukor 270

XXV. Shots from a Shikara 279

XXVI. Told by the Old Chenar 291

APPENDIX 313

INDEX 328

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Markhor	*Frontispiece*
The Still Waters of the Lake	*Facing p.* 6
In a Moghul Garden	„ 6
Haunt of the Banbuddhi	„ 18
Home of the Kali Koel	„ 18
Typical Red Bear Country	„ 32
Nildori, below Bungas Maidan	„ 32
The Jhelum near Baramulla	„ 44
Dead Bear	„ 74
Settlement of Gujars	„ 74
View from Kamre	„ 90
Astor	„ 90
Scrambling down the Indus Valley	„ 112
Himalayan Scene	„ 148
Gor and Chaumuri in Winter	„ 160
Polo at Gilgit	„ 174
Waiting their Turn at Tent-pegging	„ 174
The old Agency Garden, Gilgit	„ 192
Gilgit Fort	„ 210
Indus at Skardu	„ 244
Head of the Nullah—Ibex Ground	„ 252
Through an Avenue of Poplars	„ 260
The Achabal Stream	„ 260
Kirgah and Naupur Nullahs	„ 274

SPORT AND FOLKLORE IN THE HIMALAYA

CHAPTER I

TALES OF FAIR KASHMIR

Every country in the world has its legends and superstitions, some purely of its own, others which at least have parallels in those of other countries, showing a Greek or Roman origin, or perhaps one still more ancient, dating back to the times of our original Aryan ancestors. In Europe these old folklore stories and superstitions have to a great extent been either entirely forgotten in the rush and whirl of modern matter-of-fact civilisation, or at least relegated to the nursery as pretty tales for the children. In the East, however, where the bulk of the population is still illiterate, and family and local traditions are handed down from father to son by word of mouth, superstition is still prevalent.

Indians as a whole—the poorer and uneducated classes that is—know remarkably little either of their own religion or their own history. The religion is whatever has been the custom as long as they can remember, and whatever their Brahmins or Mullahs tell them to do; this latter, sad to relate, only too often at variance with the pure doctrines of their original faith, be it Hinduism, Islam, or any other. Their historical knowledge is generally confined to

such vague terms as "in the times of old" or "a certain king of olden times," whose name they may or may not remember, and the accounts of deeds of valour and acts of wisdom or virtue which were accomplished, as handed down from generation to generation. So much, too, is taken for granted that even such legends as might be thought important are forgotten.

I remember one day the Grunthi (*i.e.* Sikh priest) of my own regiment coming to ask for a regimental holiday on account of the festival of the Holi. The holiday was granted, and out of curiosity I asked those present, native officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, why it should be a holiday. "Oh," they said, "it is the Holi." "But why," I asked, "should the Holi be a holiday?" "It is one of our festivals," answered they, "and it is the dastūr (custom) to have a holiday." "And why, then," I continued, "is this day called the Holi, and on what account is it a festival?" One native officer was prepared to answer, but I signed to him to be quiet. All I could get out of the rest was: "It is a Bara Din (big day) with us, and has always been a holiday." Not one of them, excepting the Grunthi and the old native officer, had ever heard of Harun Kashup the sacrilegious tyrant, or of Parlad his son and Holika his sister, and how the latter was burnt by her own brother, thus giving her name to the Holi Festival. No! to them the Holi was the Holi and a feast day; the Brahmins knew all about it and when it should be kept: and that was sufficient.

Again, take any Kashmiri peasant to the ruins at Martund or Awantipur, and ask him who built them. He will at first probably answer elusively, "God knows," but if pressed, and sometimes indeed without pressing, he will tell you that none but djins or

fairies could have raised these huge blocks of stone and constructed a building so entirely different to his own tumble-down wooden house.[1] Then, if you have gained his confidence and he feels that you will not laugh at him—for there is nothing, except open abuse, which the Oriental dislikes more than ridicule, or appreciates more at the expense of others—there may follow a little fairy tale, "some legend strange and vague," through which peeps out the distorted visage of some old forgotten faith or custom, or that superstition so often found in the untutored children of Nature. Of the days gone by, when Kashmir boasted of many a fair city and building, he knows nothing. And nowhere are these quaint old-world stories and superstitions to be found in greater abundance than in the hills, where so many of the inhabitants are still Nature's children, roving the hill-sides with their flocks and herds. The vast solitudes of the higher mountain ranges, the dense forests, the dazzling snows of virgin peaks; are they not indeed a fit setting for the supernatural!

He who has sat throughout a fine spring day on some lofty spur, with no living thing in sight perhaps but a herd of ibex and a soaring eagle or two, and has listened to the avalanches rumbling down with an almost continual roar from the giant mountains which rise, rank upon rank and peak upon peak, around him, has surely experienced that feeling of the overwhelming immensity of Nature of which, at the time, man seems but a puny particle. And this is all part of a hill-man's life, and he is in touch with Nature through every fibre of his body. Or again, let a man be once caught on the open hill-side, far above the forest line and human habitations, in a severe thunderstorm, and thus be, as

[1] He will probably describe them as Pandava-lari—Houses of the Pandus.

it were, actually in the midst of the thunder and lightning, hearing and seeing their constant rumbling and dazzling flashes and the rushing of the winds, before the onslaught of which giant trees in the forest below go tumbling down like ninepins, so that the whole universe seems to be rushing and tumbling about his ears; let him be once caught in such a storm, and then he will probably no longer laugh at the simple-minded mountaineer who believes that fairies live in the eternal snows, and witches frolic before the storm.

And that same mountaineer's faith is so simple, and sometimes saves so much trouble; we Sahib-log see the vultures sailing up one after another, merging from tiny specks in the dim blue distance to settle on the remains of the animal which we have killed, and we commence arguing and speculating at once as to their prompt arrival. How do they know? Is it by their sense of smell? Is it by abnormal sight? Or is it by the use of both these senses aided by a wonderful system of signalling, the news being passed on from sentinel to sentinel as they circle so gracefully in the upper air? Who knows for certain? Our simple hill-man does, or thinks he does, which comes to much the same thing; for it saves him from all argument and speculation. It is, of course, the fairies who are at the bottom of the matter, spinning an invisible gossamer thread from the blood of the slain to the beaks of the vultures, and drawing them in unerring flight towards their meal.

Fair Kashmir, with its snowy mountains and lovely valleys, lends itself in its natural beauty, as well as through the medium of its ruins, to thoughts of the supernatural and of days long past. One can well imagine the joy and wonder of the old Buddhist

pilgrims when they gained the Kashmir side of the Zojila Pass, after crossing the Karakorums and marching for days through the dry, sterile country of Ladakh, with its eerie monasteries perched up on the top of frowning precipices. The trials and dangers of the journey over, they might well offer up a prayer of thanks as they gaze over Kashmir with its waving forests and flower-spangled meadows; that long-sought land in which lay their first great goal, the Buddhist shrines of the time of Asoka[1] and other great ones who had learned to walk in the Way.

If we visit these old ruins known as the Peri Mahal[2] (fairy palace), which overlook the Dal Lake, and are still impressive though overgrown with briars, grass, and waving irises, we may picture to ourselves the astronomer priests of old gazing into a sky lit with a multitude of stars, which twinkle in the still waters of the lake with a beauty of reflection that rivals the reality. Now, the last of the priests has long since relinquished his midnight watching, but the stars twinkle on, and the moon lights up the snows of the Kaji Nag and Pir Punjal Ranges with a fairy-like softness, whilst the boom of the bittern and the hoarse cry of the heron are still wafted up from the reed-beds below on the cool night air to the deserted ruins where the priests once dwelt.

[1] Asoka, 270 B.C.: the greatest of the Buddhist rulers of India, whose kingdom included practically the whole of what we nowadays understand by the name India. He built the original Srinagar. Another of the great Buddhists connected with Kashmir was Kanishka, the famous King of Gandhara. It was he who caused some of the relics of Buddha to be buried in a crystal box near Peshawur about the year A.D. 40. The finding of this reliquary a short while ago caused a great stir throughout the Buddhist world. Jaloka, the son of Asoka, is said by some to have built the original building on the Takht-i-Suliman at Srinagar, about 200 B.C.

[2] Peri Mahal: some authorities say that this building was erected by Prince Darah Shikoh for his tutor, Mullah Shah.

By the same fair lake still stand those magnificent chenar trees which gave their cool and inviting shade to Moghul emperors in the gardens of Nishat and Shalimar; what visions do not those old trees conjure up? Visions of love and hate and court intrigue; of Moghul emperors and beauteous courtesans; of the times when the ankle-bells of pirouetting dancing-girls tinkled to the plashing of fountains, and the rippling laughter of merry maidens chased the ripples of the wind-stirred waters over the lake, the flashes of their bright eyes vieing in quickness with that of the fish as they turned in the sunshine and darted amongst the lily-pads to avoid the fish-spearer's lance.

Can one wonder that peasant folk, born and bred in such surroundings, people the snow peaks with fairies, and, in default of historical knowledge, weave legends to suit their own romantic fancies?

The waves of conquest which have rolled over the land, and the changes of religion which have taken place, cannot fail to leave some mark upon the country and people, though it may be so slight or so changed and altered as to be scarcely discernible; and the circumstances and time of its origin may be unknown to the Kashmiri of to-day.

The gentle faith of Buddha, early Hinduism, Islam, and ancient snake worship have all had their day; and perhaps even more crude and ancient religions as well: and each has left, or is leaving, its mark. Hinduism in many a fine ruin; Buddhism in records such as those of the Chinese pilgrims, and the site of Asoka's old capital; Mahomedanism in the form of the summer palaces and gardens of the Moghuls; and snake worship too; is that not shown in the very place-names of the country?[1]

[1] Snake worship: Abul Fazal in the *Ain Akbari* says, "In seven hundred places there are carved figures of snakes, which they worship."

THE STILL WATERS OF THE LAKE.

IN A MOGHUL GARDEN.

Anantnag, Veshinag, Shishanag, and others; do all these names ending in "nag" mean nothing? Yes, to-day "Nag" is usually taken to imply that there is a lake, spring, or tarn at the place in the name of which this forms the final syllable. But does not "Nag" also mean snake? and, though the termination may have lost its original significance, can it be entirely ignored? Let the more learned settle the question.

The writer will only attempt to give a little fable or two, in hopes of showing that the termination "nag" may still maintain, in some cases at least, its connection with snakes.

. . . . . .

It was on my first visit to Kashmir, when I had but short leave, and to slay a black bear was the height of my ambition, that I found one day an old man sitting under a large walnut tree by a little wayside shrine, where fluttered a few red and white flags in the cool morning breeze. The old fellow greeted us with a friendly "Salam Aleikum," and seemed to know my shikari well. He was spare and thin, with a long grey beard, aquiline nose, and deep-set eyes, which sparkled brightly under bushy eyebrows; and he seemed the object of quite reverent respect on the part of my men. He spoke fast and somewhat indistinctly in that dialect of Punjabi generally known as "Pahari" (closely allied to Gujari), which I did not at that time understand; but, having a slight knowledge of ordinary Punjabi, I could at times follow the gist of the conversation, and gathered that he was asking why I did not go to the Kaji Nag and shoot markhor. My shikari explained that I had not the necessary permit to go there; whereat the old Pir, pointing with a skinny but steady finger towards the Range, told me that I certainly ought to get a permit to shoot in the "Kali Nag," as

there were to be found there markhor in untold numbers and of fabulous size. Even with my limited knowledge of the language I noticed that he called this range of hills, which we name the Kaji Nag, the Kali Nag, and that in talking to him my shikari did the same; but I attributed this purely to a local or personal pronunciation, and thought no more about it.

Some years later, after several trips in Karnar and Drawa (said to be a contracted form of Diarwa, meaning "Land of Deodars"), where that curious Pahari, or hill dialect, is universally spoken, I met my old friend, Fakir Shah, for such was his name, once more, and I was now able to converse with him in his own tongue. In the course of our conversation mention was again made of the Kaji Nag, and once more I noticed that the old man spoke of it as the Kali Nag; on hearing which my memory sped back to our first meeting, and the fact that I had then noticed the same peculiarity; also I remembered having heard this pronunciation several times since. So, as Fakir Shah seemed to be in a friendly and talkative mood, and I was in no hurry, and quite glad to rest under his walnut tree for a while, I sat down on the green turf, and, after sundry casual remarks, said to him: "Baba! why is it that you call those hills the Kali Nag? I always thought the name was Kaji Nag, and indeed most people call it so."

"Certainly," he replied; "nowadays most people call it Kaji Nag, but I myself always call the hill by its old name, as my father and grandfather did before me." This was all spoken with that air of undoubted superiority so often claimed by the grey hairs of a confirmed *Laudator temporis acti.*

"Then Kaji Nag is not really the proper name?" I asked somewhat meekly.

"Not a bit of it! When the Sahib-log first began to come to the country they commenced saying, 'Kaji Nag,' and, as more and more Sahibs came, those who accompanied them as shikaris gradually learned to speak of the place as their Sahibs did. It is in just the same way that nowadays every one speaks of 'Barasingh,'[1] which is the name introduced by the Sahibs and adopted by their shikaris and followers. We people never call it 'Barasingh' amongst ourselves, any more than the Kashmiris do; they call the animal 'Hangul,' and we call it 'Changal,' which seems a good enough name to me. No! formerly that peak there"—and he pointed to the one he wished to indicate—"was always called the 'Kali Nag,' and each other head and 'galli' had its own name, such as Gamalittar, Kafirkan, Tootmari, and others; but now they speak of the whole as 'Kaji Nag.' As I say, it should be Kali Nag, and for this reason:

"Up in the snow, just a little below that bare rock-face, there is a lake; so deep is it, that no man knows its depth, and its black sombre waters are such that any one gazing into them soon loses his senses. It is in this lake that the Kali Nag (black snake), who gives his name to the mountain, lives. I know not whether any man has ever seen him, but his tracks are sometimes seen; for once in ten years the Kali Nag goes to visit his mate, who, they say, lives on the top of Nanga Parbat. When he has passed by, travelling at night, the villagers in the morning see his tracks through forest and field, as if someone had dragged a huge pine-tree through their crops. For this Kali Nag is a djin, and no ordinary snake, and is of vast size."

Thus the old Pir ended his story, and became pen-

[1] The true Barasingh, or Barasingha (meaning twelve-horned), is the swamp deer (*Cervus duvauceli*).

sive ; so, seeing my baggage coolies beginning to catch me up, I bade him farewell, and left him to his meditations. As we walked down the valley I asked my shikari about the man's story, and he told me it was well known, and that what Fakir Shah had said was quite true, adding that a certain Wazir—I forget his name—had actually tried to fit out an expedition to attack the Kali Nag in his watery home ; but that the men had never started, owing to the petitions of the local people, who said that an attempt against such a djin could not but fail, and that then the Kali Nag, being enraged by the act, would vent his wrath upon them. Such is the story of the "Kali Nag" or "Kaji Nag." It may, of course, have nothing to do with snake worship, but it is at least a quaint legend accounting for a place-name.

CHAPTER II

THE LEGEND OF AISHMUKAM

ANOTHER story which is, to say the least of it, "snaky," is that of Pohar Pajjan and Aishmukam, which was only unearthed by me one day through my nearly stepping on a snake.

My shikari and I were climbing up one morning to the top of that ridge which divides the valley of Panjhair and Tral from the Liddar valley. It was autumn, and a suspicion of frost rendered the atmosphere as clear as crystal, whilst the air around us was pervaded with the pungent scent of balsams, the ripening seed-pods of which popped off like little bombs as we brushed past them, scattering their seeds in all directions. From below us came the noisy clucking of chukor and the chattering of a troop of monkeys feeding in the nut-bushes; and, as we topped the ridge, a couple of cock koklas pheasants, who had been basking and preening themselves in the morning sun, flew off in alarm.

Even if, on reaching the top of the hill, I did express a desire to stop and "admire the view," the reason that I wished to recover my breath was, in this case, not the only one; for, indeed, such was the beauty of the scene, that it would have been a sin not to stop and admire it. Behind me lay the vale of Kashmir, stretching away in a watery plain to the great barrier formed by the Pir Punjal, Kaji Nag, and Shamshaberi Ranges. The whole land had an aspect of that mellowness which precedes the bare and grey old age of the closing year. The

streams, reduced in volume, meandered through a plain of yellow grass and golden crops, like threads of silver in an oriental cloth of gold, each silver thread edged with green—those willows which, being amongst the first to put on their spring garment of delicate green leaves, are, however, the last to change it, when the rest of the tree world is adopting autumn fashions. Here and there a clump of chenar trees added a brilliant patch of colour to the scene, their leaves ranging through every shade of bronze to a deep, warm red, only outdone in brightness of colour by the little fields of red and yellow "gunhar"[1] growing on the lower slopes of the hills above the villages.

Even the houses of the villages themselves had assumed an autumn dress of golden yellow, covered as they were by the first fresh-picked maize spread out on the roofs to dry, with perhaps a string of red chillies as an extra ornament. The bright tones of the nut-bushes and other undergrowth made the pine forests look by contrast more dark and sombre than usual. To my left front rose the bare, precipitous hills which divide the heads of the Liddar and Sind valleys, each crag and precipice standing out sharp and clear in the crisp air and morning sunlight, bare and forbidding, yet softened by a sprinkling of soft snow and a faint pink tinge borrowed perhaps from the withered grasses and red-leaved saxifrages growing amongst the grey rocks. Below and in front of me lay the Liddar valley and stream, with Aishmukam and other villages forming another picture of mellow fertility; whilst to my right front rose the hills of Kishtwar and Suru, amongst which the twin peaks of Nunkun stood forth conspicuously.

[1] Gunhar (*Aramanthus*): a late autumn crop, the plant being very much like the "cock's comb" of English gardens.

Whilst sitting and enjoying this lovely view, the tinkling of a bell attracted my attention, and, looking in the direction whence the sound came, I saw a man coming down the ridge, driving two buffaloes before him. Thinking that he might turn down a little path which ran down a spur towards a village, and as my shikari wished also to question him upon the subject of stags, we rose and went to meet him. Just as we met, and the men were exchanging the usual "Salam Aleikums," a snake wriggled out of a patch of scrub near which I had stepped. Now when I see a snake my one idea is to slay it, my theory being, Kill it first and find out whether it is poisonous afterwards; "Pāhilé lāt, pīché bāt," as the natives say, "The blow first and talk about it later." According to my custom and inclination, I at once pursued the snake with stick uplifted to strike at it. What was my surprise, then, when I heard my friend with the buffaloes shout to me, "Mat māro, Sahib, mat māro!" (Don't strike, Sahib, don't strike!) So astonished was I, indeed, that I hesitated and turned round towards the speaker, a hesitation which, of course, allowed the snake to make its escape. Rather indignant at being prevented from carrying out an act so worthy—to my mind—as that of killing a snake, I said to the man somewhat brusquely, "Is that snake a pet of yours that you tell me not to kill it?"

"Oh no, Sahib," he said quite calmly, "but it won't hurt you though, if you don't hurt it."

"Perhaps not," I replied, "but it may bite some one else, which it would not have had a chance of doing had I killed it!"

"No," said he, "the snakes here are not like that; they never bite a man unless he wilfully molests them."

My experience of snakes in general had not taught me to place much faith in their affability, and I saw no

good reason for doing so in the case of this particular reptile, which had appeared to me just about as nasty-looking as any snake I had ever seen; so I asked the protector of serpents how those of this district differed from others. "That's a long story," he replied, "but if your honour so wishes I will tell you." His honour did wish, so, having got out a pipe and seated myself on a rock, I listened with interest to the story of:

Zainudin-Walli of Pohar Pajjan and Aishmukam

"Many, many years ago the Liddarwat was not inhabited, being given over to the beasts of the forest and djins and fairies. Gradually men moved up the valley, clearing jungle, bringing water in little irrigation cuts from the river, and making little patches of cultivation near the huts which they built. But beyond a certain point, no man could establish himself on account of the enmity of numberless snakes, and that djin who, in the form of a snake, was the king of them all. Many had tried to build houses and settle there; but all had either died of snake bites, or had been obliged to beat a retreat.

"At last there came to the country a very holy Pir, named Zainudin-Walli, who, on seeing the stream, the fertile valley, and the gently sloping hills, asked why it was that no one lived in such a spot, where but little labour might produce fine crops of rice and corn, and where there was grazing for so many cattle. Then the people told him of the djin, who, assuming the form of a snake, lived in a cave on the side of the hill, and how that this evil one and all the snakes who were his subjects prevented them from settling and living there. So the Pir, who in his sanctity feared nought, desired

the people to show him the cave where the djin lived, and with several men as guides, set out for the spot.

"When they came near to the cave, the men who accompanied the saint pointed to the dwelling of the djin, but would not themselves go near. But Zainudin-Walli without hesitation entered the cave, and at once perceived a large serpent, which raised its crest and hissed at him with widespread hood. Nothing daunted, the Pir, calling upon Allah and the prophet, cursed the snake and turned him into stone. And thus he stands, a figure of stone to this day, and on his broad hooded head a lamp is kept burning in honour of the saint who overcame him. When Zainudin-Walli had disposed of this djin who was king of the snakes, he summoned to him all the rest, and ordered that in future they should bite no man unless he first attacked them and tried to harm them.

"The news of the saint's exploit, and the orders which he had imposed upon the snakes, soon spread, and men readily came up the valley and took up land and built houses for themselves and their families. Because of the beauty of the spot and the richness of the soil, they called the place Aishmukam—'the Home of Luxury.' Now it so happened that of all the snakes, one, such as we call a Pohar, refused to obey the orders of Zainudin-Walli, and continued to attack whomsoever he met; so the people of Aishmukam went to the Pir, and reporting the matter to him, asked for his assistance again. At once the Pir went in search of the rebellious Pohar, and having caught him, he put him into one of those round baskets, which we folks call a Pajjan, and carried him to the top of that high peak, where he left him imprisoned in the Pajjan. Wherefore from that day the name of the hill has been Pohar Pajjan, and the snakes of the district, remembering the orders of

Zainudin-Walli, never harm those who do no harm to them."

The story-teller had spoken with a simple reverence, as though he had perfect faith in the powers of his saint, and in the snakes remaining true to their treaty obligations; personally, though interested, I am afraid I still remained wanting in faith, and killed several snakes within the next few days, for there were plenty of them about.

Nor did the fact, that a few days later three men of Boogmoor village were bitten by snakes when cutting grass, increase my trust in the efficaciousness of Zainudin-Walli's arrangement. But of course, as my shikari said, the foolish men must have lost their heads and attacked the snakes first!

CHAPTER III

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Turn where we may in Kashmir, we find some ruin, some mountain pass, or bubbling spring which has either an historical connection, or its accompanying legend. The Shamshaberi Range, the sister of the Kaji Nag, rejoices in an abundance of snakes; but, as far as I know, there is no story of a snaky nature regarding it. It is certainly haunted, however, and I have never yet met the man who would go out on that mountain and spend the night all alone on it. The fairies of the Shamshaberi are, they say, most mischievous, rolling down rocks, and then laughing with rollicking laughter as they see the scared human being skipping about trying to avoid them. Or sometimes they will even steal a man's food from under his very nose, whisking it away in a drifting cloud, so that the man will see nothing, though he may perhaps hear the fairies chuckling over what they consider a huge joke.

These fairies are bad enough, but the much feared Banbuddhi, which haunts this mountain, is far worse. This creature, which the Kashmiris call "Rantas," and the Gujars[1] and people of Karnar and Drawa, "Banbuddhi," is of evil repute and greatly feared. Some say it is a wild man, others a wild woman, gaunt and tall, with long, matted hair and burning sunken eyes—altogether most evil-looking, with beast-like feet joined on to the legs back to front, so that its tracks appear to be

[1] Gujars: A tribe of sheep- and goat-herds. Gujar-log = "Gujar-folk."

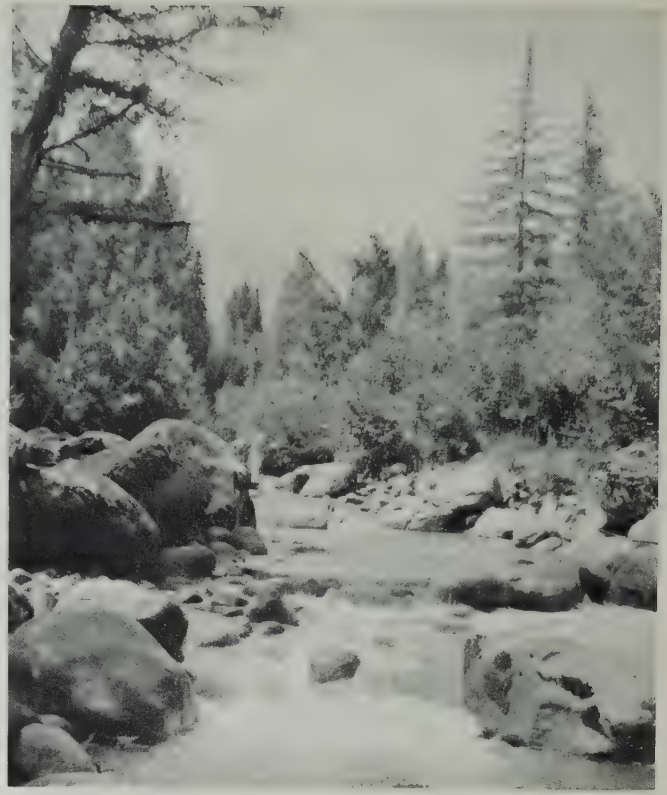
going in the opposite direction to that in which it really travels. But "those who really know" have told me that this Rantas or Banbuddhi is neither man nor beast, but an evil spirit which has the power of making itself invisible or of appearing in many different forms and speaking in many voices. Parties numbering several persons it will never interfere with, but of a single man it has no fear. In Karnar I met a Zaildar[1] and five Lumberdars who all swore they had seen the Banbuddhi of the Shamshaberi, when travelling together one day in winter. My suggestion that they had perhaps seen a Langoor[2] was scouted as absurd. Could six men be all mistaken in what they saw at the same time!

Another place which was once, if it is not now, the haunt of a famous Banbuddhi, is just on the Baltistan side of the Zojila pass; originally this place, which is just beyond "Wagé Saggan"—the parting of the waters—towards Mezahoi, was called "Brari Angan"—the cat's dancing ring. It was a fearsome spot, and the sound of fairies dancing and singing was, and is still, frequently heard, One day, very many years ago, not only were these fairy sounds heard, but a most repulsive Rantas was actually seen; and from that time the name of the spot was changed to Brari Maji, which may be translated "Old mother cat." It was from this time, too, that lonely travellers began to disappear, and men passing Brari Maji went raving mad or were bewitched. At last one Sheikh Abdullah Guzriali, a very holy man, came to Brari Maji, and, offering gifts and chanting spells, called to him all the fairies of the place. With them he made a compact that if the fairies would promise

[1] Zaildar: the civil officer responsible for the civil administration of a group of villages, the Lumberdars being the village headmen and the Tehsildar being the authority immediately superior to the Zaildar.

[2] Langoor (*Semnopithecus Schistaceus*): a large kind of grey monkey.

HAUNT OF THE BANBUDDHI.



HOME OF THE KALI KOEL.

to refrain from molesting travellers, the people in their turn would undertake to leave an offering as they passed Brari Maji—each man a gift of money or food according to his means; and the fairies agreed to this proposal which Sheikh Abdullah of Guzrial made on behalf of the people, and ceased from molesting those crossing the pass. Even to-day, the singing and laughter of the fairies may be sometimes heard, but Brari Maji, the Rantas, is never seen. Frequent crossing of the pass has now made many men callous, but still coolies and others may be seen quietly placing their hands upon their beards as they mutter a passing prayer, and leaving a few pice, or a handful of rice, or corn to appease the fairies of Brari Maji.

The termination "Angan," meaning dancing ground, is of frequent occurrence in Kashmiri place-names, the best known perhaps being the Rajdiangan Pass. Who danced or dances there I cannot say, but it is rather curious to find that in an old Persian book on Kashmir, the name is written Razdan-i-angan—Razdan being, I believe, the family name of a sect of Kashmiri Pandits.

In a mountainous country such as Kashmir, caves are naturally to be found in many places, and just as so many caves along the English coast are rightly or wrongly connected with the dark deeds of smugglers, so these Kashmiri caves mostly have some story attached to them. Leaving aside the far-famed Amarnath caves, one of the best known amongst Kashmiris is a large cavern near the village of Bomzooa, not far from the ruins of Martund. In old books this is called the "cave of Ari Rai," and is described as being "zéré damané keréwa"—"at the skirt of the foothills." The name is taken from Rajah Ari Rai al Maroof Sindiman, who, with his wife, is said to have entered the cave to explore it, having first dressed themselves in the skins of muskdeer.

Whether the skins of this animal are supposed to render the wearer proof against the spells of evil spirits, I know not; but at any rate they do not seem to have been of much service to Ari Rai and his wife, for after entering the cave they were never seen again.

The name of Haider Malik of Chadura is also handed down as that of a man who made a determined attempt to explore this place. If the account which he left behind him of his attempt has anything of truth in it, the cave must be of great extent, for in the record of his exploit, he tells us that he took with him twelve picked men, to each of whom he gave a lamp and a seer of butter as oil. Commencing from the mouth of the cave, he placed these lamp-bearers one by one as connecting links, "each man an arrow's shot distant from the last"; even thus he did not succeed in reaching the end of the cavern. But he did arrive at a spot where it branched into four tunnels, and, whilst he was meditating as to whether he should push on alone, he heard a voice whispering to him from the rocks above, and water began to drip on his head. At the same time, too, his men shouted to him that their supply of oil was coming to an end, and their lamps beginning to fail. So Haider Malik decided to retreat, and, reaching the mouth of the cave in safety, left to us the only account we have of the interior of Ari Rai's cave.

There are many such places of which but little is known, but which bear the names of people connected with them in some way, whose existence might otherwise have been entirely forgotten. Such a place is one known locally as "Rajah Ram Ki Lari," or "The Dwelling of Rajah Ram." I dare say historians may know who this Rajah Ram was, but I must confess that I do not, nor do the people who live near the place. All they can tell one is, that Rajah Ram was a man of

olden times who built the house, which, by putting two and two together, one might almost guess for oneself, without their assistance. Whoever he may have been, Rajah Ram must have liked a cold climate, for his house —or rather the traces of it—may still be seen in a very elevated spot on the high range of hills which divides Boorinimal from Drawa and the Kishenganga valley, where snow lies deep certainly for seven or eight months of the year.

CHAPTER IV

BITS ABOUT BEARS

One of the factors which go to make Kashmir an ideal country in which to spend one's leave is, that one may enjoy oneself just how one pleases. The devotee of golf may go to Gulmarg, and enjoy his game on links which are probably the most beautiful in the world. He may also play polo, tennis, or cricket, and have just as much or as little of picnics, dancing, and dinners as his temperament desires. Those who have had sufficient gaiety during the cold weather may shun society for a while, and march off to some spot in the mountains where there is no other white man within miles. Fishing, painting, small game shooting, what you will, may all be obtained in this lovely country.

The man who has long leave can naturally go farther afield than the sportsman with only a month or two from some station down country, but even the latter need not despair of sport. He can probably get a week or a fortnight's trout fishing, and some chukor, duck, and snipe shooting if it be autumn; whereas, if it be spring, he may be pretty certain of bagging one or two black bears within quite a few miles of Baramula. The poor old black bear is looked down upon, but in the Himalayas he takes the place which the black buck holds in the plains of India; he is often the first beast upon which the embryo shikari tries his skill, and many a good sportsman has learned the elements of hill-shooting in the pursuit of *Ursus Torquatus*.

Time and again *Ursus Torquatus*, the Himalayan black bear, has been called a fool. Almost all who write of him call him an ungainly beast; a foolish animal who gives no real sport; an animal whom none can take seriously: a standing joke in fact. Do not the Kashmiris, too, apply the name "son of a bear" as a term of reproach to anyone who is clumsy and loutish in body or mind? Well, well, I have dealt with many a Kashmiri villager whose common sense did not, to my mind, compare at all favourably with that of a bear. I am sorry for *Ursus Torquatus*, and I think him maligned; and, in the desperation of outraged dignity, he has asked me to set forth his case, and make his detractors show cause for their rude remarks.

Now the line Harpat[1] and I, after many years of close acquaintance, have decided to take is this. We have agreed to put down all these calumnies to sheer ignorance; and, instead of challenging others to prove their statements true, as no doubt they firmly believe them to be, we are going to try and make people reconsider their hasty judgment by telling them something of the details of a bear's life; details which are, we think, little known or at least not fully realised. By doing this we hope to be able to show that a bear is at anyrate "not such a fool as he looks," and is, if not a highly sporting animal, at least one, the study of whose habits will repay with interest anyone who cares to take the trouble to note them.

Certain things with regard to bears are generally accepted as facts; such as that bears, in the Zoo at any rate, eat buns, can climb trees, will dance if so taught, and "hug" their enemies—of which generally accepted fact more anon. But it is the family history of the bear, the little details of how he lives, moves, and

[1] Harpat: Kashmir, a bear.

has his being, which really show that Providence has bestowed upon him a very fair proportion of that rare commodity, common sense, in the form of animal instinct, to make up for his other failings.

Now let us first consider his case from a sporting point of view. He does not pretend to vie with the wild sheep and goats in this respect. The tameness or interest of the sport of bear shooting lies a good deal with the sportsman: if you go out on a moonlight night in June, and play "here we go round the mulberry bush" with a bear, or, more likely still, simply sit in or near some mulberry trees until the bear comes to feed, and then blow his head off, I confess it is not very interesting or exciting shikar. Or again, if you shoot him in a similar manner when he comes down to feed on walnuts, or play "pop and dodge" with him at night in a makki field, it is, as a rule, unsatisfactory sport. You sit up all night, and perhaps the bear never comes; or if he does come you see but little, and blaze off at an indistinct mass, which you may or may not hit.

Besides this, I have known cases in which a pony, and on two occasions bullocks, and once even an old man, was shot by mistake for a bear. The pony incident had its amusing side. One evening a man came running into camp to say that he had seen a bear going into a patch of makki to feed; it was still there, and would the Sahib come and shoot it? The Sahib and his shikari went off with the man, who showed them the spot—a patch of makki in a dip in the ground surrounded by bushes. Sure enough there was some animal feeding there, an indistinct mass in the shade of the bushes; the shikari seems to have had some doubt about it, but the news-bringer insisted that it was a bear, and that he had seen it go in. He would take all responsibility. So the Sahib fired, and down

came the black object, which turned out to be a pony; and not simply a pony, but one belonging to the very man who had brought the information, and swore it was a bear. No, I cannot say that shooting bears at night appeals to me strongly, though I would advise anyone always to sit up over a kill for a bear should he get news of a kill; not so much for the actual sport of shooting the bear as for the interest of the thing. If he be a lover of nature he will learn a lot, besides perhaps seeing a most interesting and even amusing "tamasha."[1]

Other forms of bear shooting are driving, or "honking,"[2] as it is usually called in India; stalking on the open grass slopes in the spring or autumn; or picking up the fresh tracks of a bear in the early morning, and following them to the beast's lair. In all of these methods I have had really excellent sport with bears, though naturally, as with all animals, the quality of the sport varies on occasion. In most places where honking is at all general, the beats are cut and dried affairs, and the local shikaris know exactly how to work the ground, where to place stops, and so on. When you get farther afield, where few Sahibs go, the arrangement of the beat and placing of guns and stops is a matter of considerable interest. One has to think which way the bear is most likely to go willingly, and remember that it is useless to try and drive him in an impossible direction, for he will only break back through the beaters or slip through the stops. These same stops, too, must not be so numerous and so noisy that they will turn the bear back altogether; they should be just sufficient to keep the bear moving in the direction of the guns. As far as I know, when driving bears in Kashmir, the guns always sit or stand on the ground; and on some

[1] Tamasha: show, entertainment, excitement.

[2] Honking: from the Hindustani word "hankna," to drive.

occasions, when I have only been able to see a few yards ahead of me, or where I have been sitting at the bottom of a slope down which the bear was to come, I frankly confess to feeling not a little uncomfortable. Sometimes a beat does have a tame ending. You hear the bear coming, puffing and panting along, giving you lots of warning, and he comes out so that, unless you lose your head, you really have nothing to do but simply shoot him. But bears vary very much in their behaviour during a drive; one will come dashing along, panting and puffing, and making no attempt at concealment; another will sneak along only a few yards ahead of the line of beaters, and show a sense of cunning and a silence of movement to rival that of a panther.

I have noticed that, as a rule, male animals seem to rely more on brute strength to break through, whereas she-bears show the greater cunning, and try to slip back or through the stops quietly without being seen. I have known a she-bear with a cub slip out at the end of a beat from almost under the beater's feet, and dash past a friend of mine with whom I was shooting, when he had unloaded, thinking the beat was over. Another animal, I am quite sure, came quietly to the edge of the jungle, located every stop and gun, and then lay quietly in the bushes not twenty yards in front of me without my having any idea she was there. I wonder if she knew that coolies near the end of a beat have a habit of gathering into bunches, and emerging from the jungle in single file along little paths, thus leaving gaps in the line? Anyhow, that is certainly what they did on this occasion, and sure enough, as soon as they did so there was a rush in the bushes in front of me, and the bear and her cub were back and away; which was the first and last I ever saw or, rather, heard of them.

There really is a great deal of excitement in a beat, when from the cries of the beaters you know there is a bear in the beat, but although the beaters are drawing nearer and nearer you have as yet heard nothing and seen nothing. You strain every nerve to catch the sound of a snapping twig, of a stealthy footfall, or laboured breathing. Not a sound! and then, suddenly, out pounces a bear just where you least expected it, so surprising you that he is almost across the little open space before you have had a snap at him. One bear, I remember, near Tral crawled to within five yards of me before the sound of his breathing gave him away, and I caught sight of one ear showing above the grass that grew high along the edge of the nut bushes. A bear is a most uncertain animal, and a bear honk may always be full of surprises and excitements. In writing thus, I do not mean big state drives, such as are held in Poonch or in Kashmir, when multitudes of beaters are employed, and everything is carried out on a vast scale: I mean the ordinary little beat for two Sahibs, when thirty to forty coolies are employed, and when, unless the drive is carried out properly, the bear will most likely escape.

I have mentioned stalking on the open slopes as one of the more interesting forms of bear shooting, and I said in the spring or autumn. True, this form of shooting is more usually adopted in the spring, but at certain times and places it may also be indulged in during the autumn. For instance, the majority of snow-bears,[1] or red bears as they are usually called by Indian sportsmen, do not go down to feed on the Indian corn when it is ripe; and some black bears, after the corn is cut and stacked, move up again to the grassy

[1] *Ursus Isabellinus:* called snow bear, brown bear, and more usually red bear. Native shikaris always call this animal Lal Bhalu, *i.e.* Red Bear.

uplands until snow drives them down finally. At this time there is a small white berry to be found on the hill-sides which is called "Foote," and appears to be the same as those white berries which, in English gardens, children call snow-balls: both red and black bears are very fond of these, and may often be found feeding on them. Also by the time late autumn has arrived, all the grass is sear and brown, and the Gujars, with their flocks of sheep and goats, have moved down from their summer quarters: here and there on the brown hill-side little patches of green grass may be seen like islands. These are places where sheep and goats have been penned for the night, and are known as "patris,"[1] and on them, soon after the flocks leave, young green grass springs up and remains tender and green until it is finally covered with snow. Such "patris" are always worth attention, and are a great attraction to the bears. At this time of year, too, when not feeding on grass, bears—especially red bears—may be found arduously digging for field mice; and to see a big furry bear, with his head buried in the ground digging away with the zest of a terrier, is really rather a ludicrous sight: one can't help thinking what a morsel a field mouse must be to so huge a beast! Again, in two places which I know (and there may be others) the Deosai plain and Bungas Maidan, bears may be caught in the open whilst engaged in fishing. When the snow has all melted, the rushing torrents of the summer months dwindle in size, so as to leave isolated pools. In these pools may be found quantities of small fish, and, though not a very common occurrence, not infrequently red bears may be found fishing in these pools, just as in America many a bear has been shot whilst he was fishing for salmon in the rivers.

[1] In Astor and Gilgit, patéro.

Stalking bears feeding in the open and tracking them through the jungle are forms of shikar which can be combined. At dawn go out to some spur whence a good view of likely grass slopes may be obtained. If you are lucky enough to see a bear, stalk him and shoot him: if not, instead of returning to camp, wander about over all places where bears are likely to have been feeding until you come upon fresh tracks. It may be a red bear or it may be a black bear, and this you will most likely be able to tell from the tracks. In spring the ground is generally soft, and if you get a clear impress of the bear's foot you will notice that, in the case of a red bear, the marks made by the points of the claws are very much farther in advance of the marks of the toes than in a black bear, his claws being much longer: and if it be a very clear foot mark and quite fresh, you may see that the individual toe marks have a wider gap between them in the case of a red bear, for he has more hair between his toes than his black cousin. It may here also be mentioned that it is usually possible to tell whether it is a red or black bear which has been feeding on a walnut tree during the night. Now a black bear is a greedy feeder and a good tree climber. He walks up a tree trunk as easily as a man walks upstairs, and, when in the tree, stays there and feeds from branch to branch, often breaking the smaller ones, and in his greed eating leaves and twigs as well as the fruit. A red bear can climb a tree well enough, but his claws are made for digging and not for climbing, and he does not care about it. So, unless the fruit be so ripe that it has fallen of its own accord in great quantities, he climbs up the tree, shakes it well, and then comes down again. In the case of walnuts he will usually gather the fallen nuts into one spot, and, scratching himself a comfortable

seat in the ground, start upon a regular sit-down meal; whereas the black bear, when feeding on fallen nuts, picks them up and eats them wherever he finds them.

But to return to the question of bear stalking. Find your fresh tracks, and then follow them; for a while you will find probably that they zigzag about, the animal having moved slowly, eating whatever he could find here and there. Later the tracks will probably show that he has moved on at a steady pace without stopping, most likely diagonally up hill through the jungle. Then, if it be early in the year or late autumn, you may find a place where he has sat down for a while more or less in the open, and gone on again when he began to find the sun unpleasantly hot—from this point go very carefully, for he will not have gone far. A good plan I have found is to let your shikari follow the tracks and send another man to move along the hill-side about thirty to fifty yards below him, whilst you yourself keep a little above him and slightly in advance of him. In this manner the shikari maintains the direction, and as at this time of day the wind will, if it be fine weather, be blowing up hill, the bear scents the man below when he gets near, and bolts up hill towards you. In the evening, after trying to track a bear in this manner, you can easily emerge from the jungle and watch any grass slopes or open glades near which you happen to have arrived. Stalking a bear is not difficult, and one can possibly with impunity take liberties which one would not dare take with other animals; but still even taking all usual precautions, it is by no means every stalk that terminates successfully. What frequently occurs is that a bear is sighted a long way off late in the afternoon, the day wind is blowing up hill, and you commence your stalk. You have far to go, and it is evening by the time you get near the bear—that is to say, just time for the

wind to change and begin to blow down from the hill tops. You have one more little nullah to cross, and the next ridge is the one from which you will see the bear. You test the wind, and it is all right, but even as you go that last hundred yards or so there comes a change; the bear winds you, and you gain the ridge only to see him making off up the far side as fast as his legs will carry him. I once too nearly lost a bear through forgetting that the setting sun casts a very long shadow. My shikari and I made for a point on the ridge, as we thought, well above the bear, and I poked my head over to look. However, Bhalu had moved up; and, to my horror, I saw my shadow fall just in front of his nose. He was off like a flash, but the distance being small, I was able to roll him over as he went.

A black bear has a good nose and a red bear an exceptionally good one, but the eyes of neither species are good when compared with other game, though they are, I think, keener than is usually supposed. The Himalayan black bear is a forest dweller, and spends most of his time in the jungle, where he never wants to see any very great distance, and for short distances in the jungle his eyesight is quite good enough for all ordinary purposes, whilst his nose and ears will warn him of any danger which threatens. When next you shoot a bear, look carefully at his eyes! Now a bear seeks most of his food on the ground, and his head is carried low; his eyebrows, or rather the ridges over the eyes, are prominent and come far forward, like a roof over the eye. Thus, although he can see well enough anything which is below him, he has to lift his head to a high angle in order to observe that which is above him. *Ursus Torquatus* has a pair of ears, too, which serve him very well; the red bear, on the other hand, does not seem to have a keen sense of hearing. I think one of the reasons why he has

been accredited with such very bad ears is that he is so frequently found and stalked when he is feeding near some rushing snow torrent, the sound of which deadens other noises. Once or twice I am convinced that red bears which have taken alarm at my approach can only have done so by hearing me; and these cases were all on a hill-side where there was no running water.

One of the great charms of bear shooting is the conditions under which this form of sport is carried out: glorious country, magnificent climate, and good hard exercise combined, are a tonic to both mind and body. A spring day in the Himalayas is perhaps the best example obtainable of Shakespeare's paradox, "hot and frosty"; a combination of warm sun, crisp dry air, and a sky blue with the blueness of the Mediterranean on a fine day. The keenness of the atmosphere gives one an appetite which can only be described as colossal, whilst the sun turns one's face as brown as a berry, and, if one happens to be of fair complexion, probably takes all the skin off in doing so. Let me try to give some little idea of the conditions under which the would-be slayer of bears may work. Leaving the camp near the village at earliest dawn, the way leads through orchards of apple and pear trees whose white blossoms, now falling, cover the green turf beneath with a sheet of white, which rivals the snow slopes above in beauty if not in whiteness; chattering magpies [1] fly about noisily amongst the fruit trees, and perhaps a golden oriole is seen to dart across the orchard like a shooting star. Up and down the valley by the side of the rushing, foaming stream, the clear notes of the "Kali Koel," [2] pleasingly reminiscent

[1] Not the black and white English bird, but the blue and white bird with yellow beak and long waving tail, commonly known in the hills as "Sanjara."

[2] Kali Koel: this is the usual native name for the bird, which is one of the many Himalayan thrushes. It is sometimes also called Hazar Dastan.

TYPICAL RED BEAR COUNTRY.

NILDORI, BELOW BUNGAS MAIDAN.

of our English blackbird, greet the morning with a song of rejoicing. Here and there a white-capped redstart flies from rock to rock; and a couple of water ousels make off up stream, flying low over the water. A pair of chukor are feeding in the little field of barley higher up, the cock bird standing on a stone puffing out his chest, bowing and scraping and turning round and round as he "chucks" out a torrent of affection to his mate feeding near him. Turning off up a spur covered with jungle, it is not long before the crowing of the koklas pheasants is heard all around. It is a strange noise, and sounds as if it were only half finished, like that of a young cockerel learning to crow. In summer and autumn he only crows at earliest dawn whilst still perched on the branch on which he has been roosting, or a couple of goodnight crows in the evening when he goes to roost. But now in the joyful spring season he crows until well on into the morning, and some few birds may be heard throughout the day.

The fruit blossom, the irises and forget-me-nots, and the kingcups and buttercups growing along the stream have been left behind down in the valley; here in the gloom of the pine wood, almost the only flower to be seen is the dainty little violet,[1] which grows in such profusion, that in places their sweet scent gains mastery over the perfume of the pines. Again pushing higher up the spur until it in turn meets another and more important spur, the undergrowth almost ceases, the violets become scarce, and patches of snow lie here and there in shady drifts. And now the top of the ridge is reached, as likely as not a couple of monal pheasants who have been preening themselves in the sunshine will fly off down the hill in alarm, the

[1] In many places in Kashmir the wild violets have a beautiful sweet scent just like cultivated ones.

cock bird in the rising sun looking like a bit of a rainbow falling from the skies in all his glorious plumage of bronze, blue, green, white, and orange. On this side of the hill, most of the spurs which run down to the valley below are bare grass slopes on one side and jungle-covered on the other face. From this point of vantage there is not only a good view of several of these grass slopes, but also an enchanting view of the country for miles. The sun has now risen and lights up the dark pine forests which extend in a grand sweep below, ending in the billowy undulations of the foot-hill. Beyond this are the broad, flat lands of the valley, green with young crops, and mulberry, willow, and poplar trees in their spring foliage, and intersected by water cuts and streams, gleaming silver in the morning sunshine. Beyond again in the distance, pine forests rise, contrasting darkly with the snow slopes above them; and the far hills rise ridge upon ridge, amongst the most distant of which may be recognised some giant peak, Haramukh, Nanga Parbat, or Kulahoi, be it what it may, sparkling in the sun with every pinnacle, tower, and buttress clear cut against the pure blue sky.

And it is all so peaceful: nothing jars upon the ear to spoil the beauty which the eyes behold. Near at hand is no sound but the soughing and swishing of the breeze in the trees; a few koklas are still crowing, and from below comes the chattering of a troop of monkeys and the call of the cuckoo. Homely sounds such as the lowing of cattle and barking of dogs are wafted upwards from the direction of the village; and even the song of the herd-boy is not unpleasing when toned down by distance: and as an accompaniment to all other sounds comes, almost as a drone so continuous is it, the soft cooing of countless turtle doves. Surely, whilst the shikari searches each slope with the glasses

for bears (the beauties of nature to him are as nought compared with bears), we may sit a while in the sun and gaze with wonder upon it all; and say in the gladness of our hearts, "Verily it is a good world, and it is good to be alive."

The red bear certainly cannot be said to be a dangerous animal, though occasional instances have occurred of men being mauled. The black bear, on the other hand, sometimes proves to be a tough customer of most evil temper, and it is not a very unusual thing to hear of sportsmen being mauled by *Ursus Torquatus;* in some districts, every village seems to have in it one or more men who have been wounded by bears. It is generally allowed that most wild animals will run away if they can, and bears are no exception to this rule; however, one can lay down no rules for wounded animals or females with cubs: even a cat will sometimes fly at a stranger approaching her kittens! Bears vary greatly in individual character: just as one bear blunders up and asks to be shot, and another shows the utmost cunning, so one individual animal will prove to be an arrant coward, another will show good fight and great tenacity of life, even when he has been hit by more than one well-placed bullet, and should, you think, be dead as mutton by all the rules of the game.

Many reported instances of bears charging are, I think—at any rate, when they are red bears—really cases where the frightened animal is running away, and, uncertain of the direction of the danger, happens to run towards the enemy. I have seen bears charge three times, and on the first of these occasions the charge happened in this way, and I had no one to thank for it but myself. I shot at a black bear immediately above me on the snow slope; he rolled over, and came tumbling down the slope. When within about thirty yards

of me he stopped, picked himself up, and caught sight of me. Having a broken shoulder, he could not get uphill, and seeing me directly in his path below, he proceeded to try and clear me out of the way. Had I been a little way to one side instead of right in the bottom of the nullah, I am quite sure he would have gone on and passed me without thinking of attacking.

The other two occasions on which I have seen bears charge, she-bears with cubs were in both cases the aggressors. In the first instance I had wounded the bear in a beat, not having seen the cub at all, and she charged most deliberately and fiercely, although hit in the chest with a ·450 bullet. The last occasion was an unprovoked attack. I was walking through the jungle about noon one day, with nothing but a stick in my hand, when I was suddenly charged by a bear from the bushes about twenty yards distant. When within about a couple of yards of me, she blundered into a fallen tree-trunk and turned off at right angles and back into the jungle. As she went, my shikari and I, who had faced her with uplifted sticks, saw two cubs climbing up a tall pine tree as fast as they could. The cubs went right up to the top of the tree and hid themselves most skilfully. The mother had obviously attacked simply to drive us away and give her cubs time to escape; it so happened that she blundered into the tree, but even had she not done so, I rather doubt now whether she would have pushed her attack right home. Her object was rather to frighten us away than to commit herself to a battle with us, and I have heard of a tigress in thick jungle charging backwards and forwards several times past a sportsman without actually touching him, in order to give her cubs time to get away. Still I must say the old she-bear looked very fine and rather unsettling to the nerves as she charged with her hair all standing up

on end, lips drawn back in a snarl, and uttering snorts and grunts very similar to those of a charging boar.

Connected with charging is the proverbial bear's hug! No bear that I ever saw or heard of attempted to deal with his adversary by hugging him, though he may have laid hold of him with both fore-paws after he had got him on the ground. I am convinced that the bear's mode of attack is to stand up on his hind legs, though some writers say that this is only "talk" on the part of native shikaris. By this I do not mean to say that, if you wound a bear above you on the hill-side and he charges down, he will deliberately stop and stand up on his hind legs, for I think he would be more likely to knock you flying by his rush and pass on without further molesting you, unless you and he happened to fall together. From what I have gathered from personal experience and from the narratives of people of my acquaintance who have actually been mauled by bears—and these include both Europeans and natives—I conclude that a bear in attacking his adversary stands up on his hind legs and strikes with his fore-paws, what we should call a "back-hander," inclined downwards; as he strikes he turns his head away to avoid a blow on his nose, which is very sensitive and tender. The bear is said to pay particular attention to the face, and native shikaris have told me that a bear having a man face downwards on the ground will sometimes go so far as to try and turn him over in order to get at his face, and I dare say this is true, though I cannot vouch for it personally.

Many natives are mauled when out cutting grass or collecting wood and herbs in the spring, and more especially when returning to their villages after dark in the autumn, when the Indian corn is ripe. It seems that a bear at night, hearing any noise, lays low and

quietly listens and watches; if he sees several men coming carrying a torch perhaps, his heart fails him and he makes off as soon as they approach. If only a single man, he remains quietly where he is, trusting to the man to pass him without seeing him, or feeling that at any rate he is in the dark able to deal with a single person. The man comes on along the path and practically stumbles on to the bear, who has probably been using the path too and has popped into the edge of the makki or behind any cover by the side of the path; then "Bhalu,"[1] realising that the man is almost on to him, stands up, strikes him down, and after giving him a bit of a mauling clears off. One or two cases of men being mauled may be of interest to show that bears often, if not always, stand up to strike. My Kashmiri shikari, whom I have had for a good number of years, has been mauled, once badly and once very slightly. The first time, when mauled severely, the bear stood up, struck at him, and knocked him down, the blow missing his head but breaking his shoulder; the beast then attacked him on the ground, and together they rolled down to the bottom of a long steep slope, luckily falling apart in doing so.

When in Karnar one year, a man had been killed by a bear at a place called Gabra, the night before I got there; no one actually saw what occurred, but it appeared that the man had come upon the bear suddenly in some makki, and that the animal had stood up and dealt him a single blow on the head which had crushed his skull in. This was the only wound found on the man, and the bear must, I think, have stood up to reach his head. Another case was that of a man in a village in Drawa, whom we always used to call Bhalu, because he had been mauled by a bear. He had a

[1] Bhalu: the ordinary Hindustani word for a bear.

large wound on his forehead, his mouth was prolonged in one direction almost to his ear, and what nose he had remaining wasn't worth mentioning; he was well and strong, though not a beauty. I asked him how it occurred. He said that he had been returning home one night in the autumn after a long day's tramping, and knowing that in a certain place wild vines grew profusely along the path he was following, he thought he would refresh himself with a bunch of grapes. On reaching the spot, he went a few yards off the track towards a tangled mass of vine, and was just stretching out his hand to pluck the fruit, when a big black object arose out of the gloom from the other side of the bush and dealt him a fearful blow in the face. This was the last he knew of the matter, until some men picked him up early the next morning. This man had a few scratches on his neck and shoulders, but was otherwise apparently untouched.

The young of both the red and the black bear are usually born in the spring, towards the end of the period of hibernation; the usual number of cubs is one or two, but I have known cases of three, and have heard of one abnormal case of four.

There is no doubt that *Ursus Isabellinus* and *Ursus Torquatus* do occasionally interbreed. Only one case of mixed cubs has come within my own experience, and this was the case of a black bear near Wysa who had two black cubs and one red. I have heard of other cases, however, which I have no reason to suppose otherwise than genuine; one of them being the abnormal case of four cubs mentioned above, two being black and two red. One case of this kind was rather an interesting one; two men came upon two black cubs and a red one in a lair, and not seeing the mother about, they picked them up and ran. However, they had not gone

far when they found that the old bear was following them, and being unarmed, and finding some difficulty in running whilst carrying the cubs, they determined to try and keep one of the bears at least. Coming to an open space in the jungle, they put down the red and one of the black cubs in the open, and themselves took shelter in the bushes on the far edge of the clearing. If the old bear seemed contented with the two cubs they would slip away with the third; if, on the other hand, she still followed on their tracks, they would drop the third cub also and make a bolt for it. Sure enough, the mother bear soon showed on the opposite side of the clearing, following on their tracks by scent. On seeing the two cubs, she ran to them at once, licked them all over, and took them back into the jungle whence she had come, without apparently noticing that there was one cub short. The men slipped away with the other cub, and were followed no further.

In 1908 a brother officer and I caught a black bear cub about three to four months old. The little animal was carried a distance of some three miles to a small forest bungalow where we spent the night. The mother bear followed us, and put in an appearance at the bungalow as soon as it was dark. The whole night long she paced round and round the house, keeping just inside the jungle, which grew to within a few yards of the house on three sides. The cub knew at once when its mother came, and made frantic efforts to get out, whining piteously, and being answered by the mother in a soft moaning call.

I have had the fortune to meet with one other instance of an abnormal bear which I can only attribute to the inter-breeding of the two species. I shot one day what I imagined was a common Himalayan black bear.

He was in form purely *Ursus Torquatus*, and bore the badge of his family, the white horseshoe marking on the chest. On looking closely at his skin, however, I observed that the black hairs had in certain lights a reddish appearance as though they were rusty. This was particularly noticeable on the hind quarters and all four legs and feet; moreover, on parting the hair I found that this animal was supplied with a "pashm" or soft under fur, such as is typical of *Ursus Isabellinus*. This under fur, too, was of a brownish colour. It was not so thick as that of the ordinary red bear, but was there in sufficient quantity to dispel all doubts as to its origin. I have never seen a similar case recorded, and it would be interesting to know whether any other sportsman has had a like experience.

Bears undoubtedly differ slightly according to locality; and native shikaris have several different names which they give to animals of various types. The best known of these local names is that of "Kand Koura," female "Kand Kourni," which they give to a black bear, rather small in size, with large ears. This type of bear they consider the most pugnacious as well as the most daring in the matter of stealing Indian corn, and they say even honey from the very house doors.

The red bears of Kishtwar do not as a rule run very large, I think, and the majority of them seem to be of a very light colour, as also are many bears one sees in the Kel district. As far as my personal experience goes, the red bears of the Astor and Gilgit districts are, as a rule, smaller than those of Tilel, the Kaji Nag, or Shamshaberi country. If this really is so, I imagine it is due to the very long winter through which these Astor and Gilgit bears have to hibernate, and the lack of fruits and makki on which they may fatten themselves in the autumn.

These bears must, I fancy, go into winter quarters during November, and one seldom sees a bear out and about again before May 1st, and in some places even later. This, too, is a case of total hibernation, whereas in some localities the black bears only partially hibernate.

With *Ursus Torquatus* the question of total or partial hibernation depends on the locality in which he remains during the cold weather and the amount of snowfall there. Many black bears go to sleep in their winter quarters and never venture out again until the following spring; but others, in districts where the snowfall is light, seem to break their winter slumbers every few days, and sally forth in search of food and water. This is the case in Poonch and the lower Kishengana valley, and I dare say the Murree hills. All Kashmiri shikaris will tell you that many bears of Kashmir migrate to Poonch in the late autumn, knowing that there is no snowfall there, and I am now convinced that this is true.

Anyone who cares to investigate this interesting question of the annual migration of bears may do so by carefully watching the hills of the lower Kaji Nag, which overlook the Jhelum near Baramula, during October and November. I have done this for several years, both in the above-named months and also in the spring, and what I have seen convinced me that bears do cross the Jhelum below Baramula to the Poonch side. I have never actually seen a bear swim across, but early one morning, near Hajibal, I picked up the tracks of a large black bear, and following them, found they led straight down a spur to the river bank, where we could plainly see the marks made by the beast as he entered the water. There were no returning tracks either at that spot, or above or below it.

The country between Naganara, Bosian, and Hajibal seems to be a very favourite line for bears to take; but there are probably other places equally favourable to their crossing lower down the valley towards Rampur. It seems probable, too, that some of the bears of Drawa and parts of Karnar in the autumn move down the Kishenganga valley, some doubtless staying round about Noorasehri and Nausadda, whilst others may push on down the valley until they too eventually cross into Poonch near Domel, or turn towards Majpoori, Mianjani, and the Gallis,[1] where in the lower valleys there would be no snowfall. In this category I should be inclined to include any bears living in the Kishenganga valley below Sailkalla and Ashkote and in the valley of the Ginger Pani below Gabra. In the Kishenganga valley that purple berry which is known as "amlook,"[2] and which is to be seen for sale in the bazaars of Kashmir and the Punjab, either fresh or dried, is very plentiful. Bears are particularly fond of this, and it doubtless is the first attraction to draw them down in the latter half of October, when it is ripe. Once down there it is easy for them to continue on their downward course, and natural also when the snow falls higher up and they find they can still procure food by doing so.

Above Gabra, in Karnar, that is to say in the vicinity of Gabduri and Naukote, I have noticed that the bears in late autumn seem to move in the other direction, that is, away from the Kishenganga and towards the vast forests round Wyhama or the lower slopes of the Kaji Nag towards Baramula. In two separate years I have had the fortune to be in the

[1] The Gallis: the small hill-stations near Murree, such as Doonga Galli and Changla Galli; often spoken of collectively as "the Gallis."

[2] Amlook: this is a tree of the family Dyospirus, but I do not know its proper name.

Bungas Maidan—an elevated "marg" in the Shamshaberi—when the first snow has fallen. This place is full of bears in late autumn after the Gujars have departed; and when the snow fell it was easy to see by their tracks what the bears did, and where they went to. They seemed to have two recognised routes, the favourite being from the south-eastern end of Bungas, through Nildori, down towards Naogam and Wyhama. They seemed almost to follow a beaten track—so much so, indeed, that near Nildori I counted the tracks of fourteen different bears, all red except two, I think, who had descended on a frontage of no more than one mile during one single night. The other exit for the Bungas bears is from the opposite end of the Maidan down towards Drungiari and Rangawar, to which places also descend the animals from Boorimal and the high ground above Zandreshan. Although interesting, this can scarcely be termed a migration, as it is purely local.

The red bears of Astor and Gilgit mostly pass the winter in some cave or hole under a big rock; but black bears and a good number of red bears in Kashmir, where vast forests are the rule rather than the exception, seem to find the hollow trunk of a big tree most convenient for their place of hibernation. When a bear first emerges from his winter quarters he is generally weak and thin, or at any rate stiff in the joints. They seem to have a great dislike to lying on wet ground, and if they cannot find a dry spot to lie up in, they will make for themselves a regular nest in a tree, which they will use for the first week or so. I have seen several of these "nests"; the best example of which I at first thought was an old machan, until on approaching it, the numerous claw marks on the tree and other signs showed what it really was.

On the whole the red bear may be classed as a

THE JHELUM NEAR BARAMULLA.

harmless beast, although he does kill a certain number of sheep, cattle, and ponies; but the black bear is a rapacious villain, and the damage he does is enormous. In this respect one's sympathies cannot but be with the villagers rather than the bear. His fondness for the gum of the pine tree leads him to destroy countless young trees. With his sharp claws and teeth he rips off the bark, and licks off the gum which exudes, and even chews the bark; so that if he happens to pay two or three visits to the same tree, he works round it and eventually "rings" it, so that it soon withers and dies. The number of trees killed in this manner is surprisingly large. Again, when the Indian corn is ready for him he is a great glutton; and the amount of corn a bear will eat in one night, added to that which he tramples down, makes an appreciable difference to a poor man's crop. Even when the corn is cut, and stacked near the houses, it is not altogether safe from his depredations, for he is the most brazen-faced robber, and thinks nothing of sitting down within a few yards of an outlying house and feeding off the "makki" stacked near it.

The extent to which black bears kill cattle is perhaps not fully realised; and as an example of this I cannot do better than say that in about a month I killed four black bears over bullocks which they had killed; three of them without moving camp. At the same time I had several other kills reported to me, which I did not investigate, as I was really after markhor at the time. One of these bears, an animal who patronised the small village of Bijaldara, accounted for nine head of cattle within about three weeks before I slew him. This cattle-killing is far more common in some districts than others; the worst locality in this respect being Karnar, and it appears to be de-

cidedly on the increase. One old Gujar, who had lost two bullocks, once said to me, "If this continues much longer unchecked they will soon take to eating men." This is an exaggeration; but there is no doubt that this fondness for meat diet is an acquired taste, which increases and becomes more and more common. Both Gujars and shikaris say that ten or fifteen years ago it was an unusual occurrence for cattle to be killed by black bears, whereas now one may hear of two or three kills in a week in parts of Karnar. Some Gujars attribute this state of affairs to the fact that some years ago great numbers of buffaloes died of disease, and the bears, feeding on the carrion, acquired a liking for beef; which has spread and spread, as new generations of bears have been brought up to this taste.

Doubtless it is not every bear who feeds on meat that is an actual cattle-killer; one bear kills, and several come to the scent of the kill. She-bears as a rule do not seem to take to killing, but they and their cubs will gladly take a meal off a bullock killed by another bear; and curiously enough, it seems that an old male bear, who has a kill, will allow a she-bear and her small cubs to feed off his kill without interfering with them. If one or both of these cubs happen to be males, it is not wonderful that they in turn should eventually become cattle thieves. When two or more bears come to the same kill there are the makings of a fine "tamāsha," and perhaps a battle royal. If two big bears eventually come to blows, and there happen to be any small immature animals on the scene, these latter will sometimes climb up trees either in fright or to keep clear of the two big antagonists. Unless two bears are more or less of equal strength and equally matched, they will seldom actually

engage, the weaker of the two seeming to know instinctively that he has met more than his match; but there is often much amusing challenging and manœuvring before one animal gives way and departs. The silence of movement of a big and apparently clumsy animal, such as the bear, is wonderful; and it is frequently this trick of challenging which first betrays a bear's presence near the kill: for many bears will not straightway approach a kill, but will circle round it, keeping under cover, and challenge several times before showing themselves. This is, I fancy, in order to frighten away jackals or dogs which may be at the carcass; and perhaps, too, to ascertain whether there is any other bear about. The challenging is done by striking the ground heavily with the fore foot; and it is surprising what a loud thud a bear can make in this manner.

One of the most entertaining evenings it has been my fortune to enjoy, was spent over the carcass of a bullock near Gabduri, in the Shamshaberi. Soon after mounting the machan, the evening star commenced to show faintly, and the last glow of the setting sun grew paler and paler as day faded into the realm of night. With the departing day died away the sounds that prevail by day, and gradually the voices of the night took their place. The lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep and goats ceased when they reached the place to which they were driven in for the night, and with them the shrill cries and whistles of the herdsmen, their day's work now at an end. The noisy cicadas cease their buzzing as the Kali Koel trills out his evensong. Soon the chirping of crickets takes the place of the cicada's whirring; and a flying squirrel[1]

[1] Flying squirrel: these little animals are generally called by natives by the name of "kees."

is seen distinctly against the now starlit sky as he swoops from the deodar opposite to feed on the horse-chestnut thirty yards away. The last sound of the dying day is a shrill cry and a flapping of wings as a monal flies up into a tree to roost, higher up the hill: and then night has come. The crickets are now in full chorus; the owls hoot softly to each other from tree to tree, and the peculiar call of the flying squirrel, which is neither dog's bark nor cat's mew, is heard all around. All sounds seem soft and subdued, for at this altitude there are no jackals to mar the symphony with their ghostly wailings. Below the machan, whence we are watching, the "gooch"[1] bushes grow thick, underneath one of which, just visible, lies the kill; and beyond them runs a little water-course, which borders that land of mystery, the gloomy pine forest.

The next thing which strikes us is (at first we scarcely realise it, for we have seen nothing and heard nothing), a cessation of sound, for suddenly the owls and flying squirrels in our immediate vicinity become silent, and even the crickets seem less vociferous. There must be something to account for this, though we cannot see it. And now from a little distance to our left comes a strange sound; two or three times click, click, click, and then silence. What is it? In a flash it comes to us; we remember having noticed that the water-course is spanned by a dead fallen tree, and the noise that we have just heard is that made by the bear's claws on the wood as he crosses the little nullah by this natural bridge. In vain we strain our eyes in the direction of the sound; the bushes are too thick, and we can see nothing until he is actually at the kill; and so long is the silence maintained, that

[1] Gooch: the name of a very common bush, which has a purple berry, much sought after by bears.

we begin to think that our imagination has played a trick upon us. However, yet another sound now attracts our attention; it is a noise of prolonged sniffing, and comes from the bushes in front of us. The bear is suspicious; and if we could only make him out we should see him standing quite still amongst the undergrowth, his uplifted head moving slowly from side to side, and his flexible nose quivering and twitching as he scents the tainted air. After another long silence the sound is repeated again and yet again, each time coming from a slightly different direction as the bear circles round the kill; but so skilfully does he take cover, and so silently does he move, that we do not even catch a glimpse of him, or know when he moves.

Suddenly, and without warning, a loud thud comes from behind, making us start, so that we fear we must have betrayed our presence, and we have scarcely recovered from our surprise when the challenge is answered by a similar thumping from the direction of the water-course. After this the challenging becomes more and more frequent and impatient as the two animals manœuvre round and round the kill, without, however, either closing with each other or showing themselves in the open; and all that we can see is so indistinct and uncertain that we are doubtful whether it is a real object or only our imagination conjuring up visions in the dark. As the game continues we begin to think that the two antagonists must both be tough customers, and that the skirmishing will develop into a general engagement, of which we shall be the interested spectators: but we are mistaken, for suddenly there is a rush through the bushes, accompanied by low growls, a couple of short sharp barks, and we just catch a glimpse of one of the bears as he jumps the water-course and seeks safety in flight. Such scenes are frequently

being enacted in the still hours of a summer's night, and may be watched by anyone who cares to spend some time camping near a settlement of Gujars.

Anyone who has ever seen an animal killed by a bear will at once realise the devilish cruelty of his methods. When once the poor beast has been seized, it is literally a matter of brute strength. No attempt is made to kill it by a single bite or blow; as soon as his enormous strength has borne the victim to the ground, the bear commences to "eat it to death!" It was after finding a bullock, which a bear had seized in the early hours of the morning, still alive some twelve hours later, though so helpless that he simply had to lie there waiting for his enemy to return and finish him off, that I swore that I would never spare another black bear.

A red bear almost invariably buries his kill to protect it from crows and vultures, who would certainly pick the carcass clean long before he had time to return for a second meal. I have never known a black bear do this, though I believe they do so occasionally. A black bear usually contents himself with drawing the kill into some water-course or under thick bushes, which protect it to a certain extent.

I have seen a black bear on his kill in the daytime surrounded by vultures and crows who tried his temper sorely. The vultures mostly remained in safety, perched upon trees round about, one or two perhaps flying down and walking backwards and forwards at a safe distance; the crows, however, were most daring, and would even try and settle on the kill, hopping round and cawing vociferously, to which Bhalu objected most strongly. Every now and then he would jump up and dash at the crows with angry growls, when they would flutter out of his way, and after a few caws, more abusive than ever, would be back in the same place again.

The behaviour of a bear on being hit is uncertain, and it is sometimes difficult at first to be sure whether the animal be hit or not. The red bear is a silent animal, and, if he answers to the shot at all, it will only be by a low, rumbling growl. The black bear, on the other hand, is sometimes very noisy, and on being wounded emits several loud "woofs," very much like the bark of a big dog. Indeed it is not always necessary for him to be hit at all for him to do this, for occasionally a bear, when the bullet strikes near him, will give three or four angry "woofs," and, relaxing all his muscles, will roll head over heels down the hill-side, apparently an inert mass, until he reaches the bottom, when he will pick himself up and run off. On each occasion when I have seen this happen I have noticed that it has been the case that the bear was on the open hill-side and rolled down to the edge of the nearest cover, the bushes and jungle below. Each time, too, I was at first quite convinced that I had mortally wounded the bear; but after finding no blood and going to the place where the beast had been standing when I fired, I found my bullet in the ground either just in front of his nose or at his feet perhaps, and on one occasion a tuft of black hair, showing that the bullet had grazed him. On the other hand, a black bear will sometimes, when wounded mortally or otherwise, utter no sound, and the shikari will often say you have missed him. The absence of blood, too, must not always be taken as a sure proof that a bear is missed, for in the autumn these animals are covered with such a thick layer of fat that the bullet wound seems to close up, and, unless the bullet be a heavy one and has also passed right through the animal, all bleeding will for a time be internal, and he may cover a considerable distance before any blood is to be seen. The bear is a very tough animal, and is very

tenacious of life, sometimes covering long distances even when mortally wounded.

The question of the best all-round rifle has lately been very thoroughly dealt with in the *Field*, so that, with regard to bears, all I will here say is that I have killed bears with single shots both with a ·256 and a ·303 rifle, but—and this to me seems the important point—I have also with these weapons pounded lead into bears and never got them, or have only done so after following them for a long distance. If a man is such a good shot that he can say, "I can hit a moving animal at one hundred yards every time absolutely in the exact spot I wish to"; well! by all means let him use a small-bore rifle for bear. If, like the writer, he is not so sure of his prowess, then I say, for his own benefit and out of kindness to the bears, let him arm himself with a rifle of bigger bore.

CHAPTER V

SOME PAGES FROM THE LIFE STORY OF A BEAR

Early Days

In the heart of the dense forest which clothes the lower slopes of the Kaji Nag stands a deodar tree. It is one amongst many, and its huge trunk is hollow at the base. The fact that it is hollow is in itself nothing; many old trees have hollow trunks: but this tree is of special interest.

In it, since the beginning of December, the old she-bear had been snugly curled up, and though it was now the beginning of March, not once had she so much as poked her nose outside, where all grass, roots, and other food such as bears love were covered by deep snow. Not a track or a trace upon the snow gave away the secret of her winter quarters; but a keen observer passing that way might have noticed a something black, a deeper black even than the deepest shadow, apparently on the trunk of the tree. At first it might appear to be simply a dark cavity in the tree-trunk, but its deep blackness, intensified by the snow that had drifted up against it, would invite a more minute investigation. From this investigation it would be seen that it was indeed a hole in the tree half blocked up by drifting snow, and furthermore that from the inside the hole was filled by a mass of thick black hair.

So much from the external appearance of the tree.

Now let us look inside. It is almost pitch dark, for the old she-bear has her broad back wedged up against the only opening of any size; and but a faint glimmer of light comes in through a crack in the tree-trunk a little higher up. Inside, nestling close to their mother for warmth, and because there is but little room, are two smaller black forms. They are last year's cubs, and are strong, well-grown animals, for now they are a year old almost to a day. Very peacefully have they slept throughout the long winter months, and indeed they would gladly continue to do so for another ten or fifteen days.

But their mother had for some days past been wakeful, restless, and bad-tempered; so that they too have now become restless, and have begun to feel the pangs of hunger and the desire to stretch their cramped limbs. After a day or two of similar discomfort, matters came to a crisis, and it was in this wise that the young bears reached the first big milestone on their road of life.

One evening, having poked her nose outside to gaze critically upon the white world without, their mother changed her position. The view from the deodar tree was not extensive, but it was sufficient to tell her that if she turned her last year's cubs adrift in the world, henceforth probably never to see her again, they would be able to exist. The state of the melting snow, the distant cry of a cuckoo in the valley below, the frightened scream of some scared koklas pheasant, the chattering of a troop of monkeys; these and other sounds, combined with a feeling of spring in the air, all told her that lower down the snow must have melted, laying bare tender shoots of "kehndal"[1] and that the young barley sown

[1] Kehndal: a favourite food for bears in the early spring. I am no botanist, so cannot speak with any certainty, but I believe this plant to be *angelica*, or at any rate something very like it.

last November would now be showing above ground, to form succulent food for the youngsters.

She did not really care much how they fared, for her interest in them was gone. They had got to be turned out, and there the matter ended as far as she was concerned. Accordingly, having jostled them towards the outlet with her feet, she began to make things so uncomfortable for them that one of the young bears, who had always been stronger and more independent than his sister, went out of his own accord. His sister, however, in spite of many plaintive appeals, had to be forcibly ejected. Even then she came back once and tried to re-enter the old home, but received such a cuff on the side of her head that she too crept off into the darkness, to be no more seen.

The old bear now took up her former position, with her back wedged up tight against the outlet, and a few days later two more little bears came into the world. They were tiny, helpless little things, and a man being shown one might well be at a loss to say what manner of beast it was. At first, too, it might appear that not a vestige of hair covered their bodies; though this was only partly true, for on their backs they had soft smooth hair, all the underparts of their little bodies being quite hairless; and so small were their little ears, that one could scarce catch hold of them between finger and thumb. As for their faces, not even the proudest of mothers could say they were beautiful, or that they bore much resemblance to the features of full-grown specimens of the Himalayan black bear. Soft, wrinkled, pink noses above gaping, toothless mouths, and above this again two minute slits, from their position lead one to hope that they might some day become small bright eyes. But their feet![1] O yes, look carefully at

[1] Some shikaris maintain that when first born, bear cubs have no claws, but to me this seems unlikely.

their feet! are they not, indeed, minute facsimiles of their mother's? In short, they are cubs that will need a lot of licking into shape!

For about ten days they changed but little in appearance, though they grew somewhat bigger and stronger, but about the twelfth or fourteenth day there came a change. The little slits opened and became eyes; faint marks on their gums showed that teeth were coming, whilst their whole faces seemed to have taken a more decided form, and quite a quantity of soft black fur now covered their backs. And so they improved in looks day by day, until, when about hree weeks old, the most ignorant of human beings beholding them might have said, "These are indeed young bears!"

And all this time their mother had scarcely moved a limb, and had nestled them close to her own body for warmth and nourishment. Now she began to feel that, though the cares of her motherhood were by no means over, she must begin to think a little of herself.

Her long hibernation without food and the care of her young ones had greatly reduced her strength, and, but for the birth of these cubs, she would probably have gone in search of food some days previous to this. When she had retired to her winter quarters, her body had been covered with layer upon layer of fat—a natural protection against cold and hunger—but now she was gaunt and thin.

One day, about a month after the birth of the cubs, she crawled out of the tree which had so long been her refuge, and stood outside blinking in the setting sun, whose power, now growing greater day by day, had warmed her limbs and caused the blood to course through her veins again with the vigour of spring;

giving to her animal instinct the glad tidings that the time had come when food might be found in plenty. For a while she stood quite still, and then stretched each cramped limb: having done this, she moved off slowly and laboriously, for she seemed to be still stiff and weak. She did not attempt to go far, but having completed a circuit of perhaps a hundred yards, she returned to the tree. This was more by way of exercising her cramped limbs than in search of food. In this retired spot the snow still lay thick, and had only melted here and there in patches, where the noonday sun had penetrated the jungle. In one of these patches she found some shoots of young grass, which she ate, and then passed on towards the hollow tree.

Next day she again left her cubs for a while, and this time wandered farther afield. Whatever food she came upon she ate readily, spending quite a long while in a little nullah, searching for last year's fallen walnuts.[1] She ripped the bark of a young pine-tree with her sharp claws, greedily licking off the gum which exuded.

For a few days no difference was noticeable in her proceedings, except that she carried her search for food farther and farther afield, but never went away far from her cubs.

Then came a red-letter day in the lives of the cubs, when their mother one afternoon lifted them one by one from the lair in her mouth, and deposited them in the sun outside. The first day, after they had got over their first bewilderment, they waddled shakily round their mother, who stood watching them with pride; and

[1] I have observed that bears awakened from their winter's sleep seem to experience some sort of irritation in their teeth, to alleviate which they search for walnuts, or sometimes even old bones, if they happen to know where a bullock has been killed the previous autumn. Pine bark and gum they also seem to take medicinally, and ruin numbers of pine trees in doing so.

occasionally they would sit down and shake or lick their little paws, as a cat might do, when they set foot upon some cold wet patch of ground.

By the third or fourth day they were quite strong enough on their legs to follow their mother to a forest glade near by, where each even ate a few blades of green grass, not because they were hungry, but in imitation of their mother, whose side they never left and whose every movement they nervously followed. This took place in the afternoon whilst the sun in the glade still gave some warmth; for as soon as the sun commenced to set and the cold night wind to blow downhill from the snowy mountain-tops, she took her cubs home and bundled them into the lair.[1] They were as yet weak and nervous, and had no idea but to follow and imitate, as well as they could, whatever their mother did. Even when a pair of monal pheasants, startled by the advent of the bear family, flew off before them with a whirr of wings and shrill cries, the cubs had at once run for refuge between their mother's forelegs.

After she had taken her cubs back to their home, she went out again and made straight for a large tree near by. She had looked at this tree critically several times during her rambles, and now, after one more good look from below, she proceeded to climb up it. It had a mighty thick trunk, which at a height of some ten feet from the ground became three thick main branches, growing upwards and outwards, so as to form with the main stem a sort of cup. Over and above it the thick evergreen foliage formed an admirable roof, so that the collection of leaves and twigs in the fork of the tree

[1] A very useful general rule to remember when stalking game. During the daytime the wind blows up the valley, and down during evening and night. If heavy clouds gather over the hill-tops, the wind even during the day generally seems to blow down from under the clouds.

was quite dry. This she further improved with more leaves and branches, until she had formed something like the nest of a gigantic bird.

Next day, after the family had been out, instead of returning to the old home she brought her cubs to the tree in which she had prepared the nest. One by one she picked them up in her mouth and carried them up into the nest. For some days they continued to live in this nest, after which they had no fixed place of abode, for now the cubs were becoming strong, and easily followed their mother wherever she went, and each day they were able to find some dry spot under bush or rock to lay up in during the day. The old bear, too, though still lamentably thin, was apparently as strong and active as ever; so that now she had less apprehension of danger for her cubs, who remained out all night with her, learning the ways of the woods.

They frequently came upon the tracks of other bears, and soon too learned to recognise the round pug-marks of the leopard, though they never actually saw Mr. Spots himself. They soon became accustomed to the crowing of the koklas pheasants, and the monal who delighted in the remains of rotten old tree-trunks which mother bear tore to pieces with her powerful claws. They observed that most things seemed to be more or less frightened of them, or at least to keep clear of them, but one day danger and surprise came upon the cubs from an unexpected quarter.

After a cold misty night, the succulence of the "kehndal" and the warmth of the rising sun had tempted them to stay out on the hill-side longer than usual. The two cubs were at the moment having a wrestling match in the long grass which covered a flat-topped spur, whilst their mother basked in the sunshine and quietly grazed a little above them. As she

grazed, a shadow flitted across her, and a second later a shrill whistling cry caused her to run hurriedly to her children. She was only just in time, for just as she reached them one of the two eagles circling above—those magnificent black and white birds the natives call "singh kand"—swooped at the cubs. The old bear stood up on her hind legs, and uttering short angry barks struck out at the assailant with her fore-paws. This was too much even for a couple of "singh kand," who are brave and powerful birds, but as they continued to hover round, the old bear made off, the cubs running between her legs under her stomach, so carefully concealed that, until he looked with field-glasses, the sportsman who happened to be an amused spectator of the whole affair from a ridge some 800 yards distant, thought that the mother had left her cubs behind.

These were the only enemies who threatened them from the air, though crows and magpies were sometimes a nuisance. The former would come and sit by them and caw at them when they were in the open, thus drawing attention to them which their mother strongly resented; but it was not until later on that they were worried by a family of magpies, who gave away their position to everybody in the jungle by flitting over their heads and chattering at them the while. There was one other animal, even smaller than the singh kand, for whom the cubs entertained a feeling which was half aversion, half fear, though he never actually meddled with them. It was, however, the manner of their first introduction to Lungari, the pine-marten, that showed them the dogged and remorseless way in which a pair of these small animals will hunt down others far larger than themselves.[1]

[1] "The Indian marten. I have seen them hunting musk-deer, once in the Kaj-Nag and another time in Garhwal."—Lawrence's *Vale of Kashmir*.

One day they were making their way up a nullah, having had their early morning drink from the stream which rushed down it, when they saw an animal leaping from rock to rock in the bed of the stream, and staggering through the foaming water towards them. It was the picture of abject fear: its little tongue lolled out under the gaping nostrils, the soft brown eyes bulged in terror and exhaustion, and as it stumbled and lurched against a rock, a handful of its soft, bristly hair—hair like shreds of pith—flew from its heaving flank.

At first the cubs saw nothing to account for the poor musk-deer's state of fright and exhaustion, but as it bounded past them they caught sight of two small, lithe forms, black, chestnut, and yellow in colour, and about the shape and size of big polecats, running along on either side of the stream—a pair of pine-martens. Nor did the cubs know that these cruel little hunters had followed their prey for many hours, even a matter of days; sometimes far behind, sometimes close, mostly by scent, but lately often on sight, but ever remorselessly and untiringly, until the musk-deer, hungry and weary, in its final desperation had taken to water, as they usually do. But they knew that the end could not be far off now, and they caught something of the abject fear which they read in the eyes of the hunted beast.

The food the bears ate was chiefly young grass, tender green leaves, and "kehndal," so much beloved of all bears. It was getting a little big and coarse now, but "minjal" (a sort of wild spinach) was coming on, which was just as good. The only thing about "minjal" was that the mother bear knew well that the Kashmiri villager, who had been without green food all the winter, was just as fond of it as she was, and consequently there was always a chance of meeting her dreaded enemy,

man, if she tarried after daylight anywhere where there was minjal. The young barley crops coming up round the villages tempted her sorely, but, on account of her cubs, she kept as yet well above the habitations of man.

It was when the cubs were about three months old that they made their first acquaintance with man. After feeding all night, they had drunk from the stream, and, having found a suitable bed of dry pine-needles under a big tree, they had laid themselves down to sleep. Their mother had suckled them, for though they ate a certain amount of grass, they were still chiefly dependent on mother's milk for nourishment. Just as they were settling down to sleep, the clack of human voices at no great distance broke upon their mother's ears. At once she stood up, but did not as yet run away, as she was still uncertain whence came the danger. It took her but a second to locate the sound, though as yet no scent had reached her, for the wind was blowing uphill and the voices came from above; but even as she stood listening, several Kashmiri women, carrying bundles of grass, appeared on the jungle-track above. In a second the three bears disappeared, going off downhill silently, though at a fast trot, followed by shouts of abuse, born of fear, from the women. The cubs, who had never seen man before, were much scared, and one of them, jumping on to its mother's back as she turned to run, remained clinging to her shaggy neck until they had covered nearly a mile. The old bear, who knew man well, was not much alarmed by the women, though experience had taught her to distrust mankind in any form; but even she did not know what a narrow escape she and her cubs had really had.

The women were still standing at the same spot,

talking at the top of their voices, when three other forms, those of men, one of whom carried a rifle, came silently through the jungle. Hearing the voices of the women, their hopes of the sport they had been seeking sank low. They asked the women if they had seen anything of bears? Oh yes! indeed they had; even now they came upon a black bear and two cubs, which, thanks to the mercy of Allah and their own shouts, had run off down the hill. One of the men had continued to follow the tracks which they had silently and carefully been following since daybreak, and, on reaching the tree under which the bears had been lying, he stopped, uttered a slight whistle, and beckoned to his companions who were talking to the women. On joining him they saw three slight depressions, where the soft soil had been pressed down by heavy bodies: one large, and two small ones beside it. Bending down, the first man laid his hand to the biggest of three hollows, and it was still warm! The stream of Kashmiri abuse that was showered upon the unfortunate women is unprintable; and even the Englishman's opinion on the subject does not concern the lives of the three bears whose career we are following. So let it pass.

For a month or so after this the lives of the young bears were uneventful and for the most part happy, though sometimes, when they played too uproariously together or fought with one another, making so much noise as to attract attention, their mother would give a short sharp bark and administer such a smack to one or both that their spirits would be subdued, but not for long. Until late in June they remained fairly high up above the villages, moving higher and higher as the snow melted. They seldom saw or scented a human being, but now the Gujars infested the valleys with

their flocks of goats, sheep, and oxen, disturbing somewhat the peace of mind and sense of security of the old she-bear and her cubs. Higher up the nullah, where a snow bridge still spanned the torrent, lived an old red bear who rather appreciated the arrival of the Gujar-log than otherwise. He had no cubs to think of, and felt quite capable of looking after himself. To show his contempt for the orders of the Dogra Raj in Kashmir[1] he killed a young heifer the very day after the arrival of the flocks in the nullah. Although many of her kind had taken to cattle-killing, our she-bear had never done so; and as the grass was getting long and coarse, she and her family moved down, travelling some ten miles in the night, to a jungle on the border of civilisation. She knew of a nice shady nullah there, with cool, snow-fed water in it, where the breeze blew gently throughout the day, just enough to keep off the mosquitoes, and in this place she and her cubs made their lair, sleeping from dawn till dusk.

Now the time had come for the cubs to be introduced to a new joy—mulberries! In Kashmir everything that has life, from man down to birds and fishes, and even the village dogs, at this season feeds upon mulberries.[2] The cubs were now so big and strong that there was no especial danger in their going down near the villages to feed on the luscious fruit, provided they were careful. For some considerable time they remained here, feeding throughout the night, for there was no moon, and nothing worried them, save the barking of the village dogs. There were other bears in the jungle, who had also come down for the mulberries, like themselves, but the mother

[1] The ruling family of Kashmir being Dogras, the killing of cattle and shooting of yaks is prohibited within the dominions of the Maharajah of Kashmir.

[2] I once saw an old and mangey fox come out of the jungle and eat the mulberries which had fallen from a tree close to my camp.

and her cubs always kept aloof from them. When the new moon came they did not go down near the village till the moon had set, but kept to the jungle, where they found a few wild mulberries and other food such as the roots of the surum ganda and ants' nests. It was when the moon was about a week or ten days old, setting perhaps about midnight, that our family of bears got a severe fright.

Now the mulberry trees were down by the brook, about half a mile from the village, where a long wooded spur ran down from the hills, causing the brook to wind in its course.

This spur was the bear's most favourable line of approach to the mulberry grove, as the jungle ran down to within a hundred yards of it. On this particular night, the moon had not yet sunk behind the western hills, when the bears, having made their way down the spur, arrived at the edge of the jungle. They did not at once come out into the open, but stood listening and sniffing just inside the jungle, whence they could see without being seen. They had just made up their minds that it would be safe to cross the open field to the mulberry grove, when there was a flash and a report from beyond the fruit-trees. At once they turned and fled through the jungle, not silently, but crashing through the undergrowth at full gallop, for they were really scared. As they fled they heard a series of short hoarse 'woofs," a heavy body fell with a thud to the ground, the rifle spoke again, and then all was silent.[1]

When the old she-bear had gone about a couple of hundred yards into the jungle she felt safer, and slowed

[1] Black bears are often very noisy when wounded, answering to the shot loudly. A red bear, on the other hand, seldom utters a sound, and however badly hit, will, as a rule, rush on till it falls quite dead. Red bears—if they answer to the shot at all—do so as a rule by a low gurgling growl.

down into a trot, finally stopping altogether as she realised that only one cub was with her. They had all started off together in one general direction in their precipitous flight, but one of the cubs had lost its head in fright and had got separated. Now the old bear knew that the farther they went the harder it would become to recover her lost cub, but as by now, in the direction of the village, dogs were barking and men shouting and running about with torches, she dare not call her cubs as she would have done in ordinary circumstances; that is, by a low whine such as a big dog might make when the door is closed between herself and her puppies. No: that would not do, but still she would call her errant cub in another manner. She sat down, well screened by bushes, with her one frightened child crouched beside her, and snapped her teeth together, her powerful jaws working like a trap. Tap, tap, tap, a pause, then again tap, tap, tap, another pause to listen, and anyone some way off would say it was a woodpecker at work on a hollow tree. True, his mother had never had occasion to call him in this way before, but instinct told him what it was. When the Sahib had fired at the other bear up the tree, he had been so scared that he had bolted some considerable way through the jungle before he realised that he was alone. When he did realise it, he crouched under a thick bush, like a hare in her form, and listened. It was the call that he was used to that he listened for, but it came not. Presently, however, he heard the tap, tap, tap, and something told him it was his mother calling him. Still he was uncertain and frightened, so he waited until the call was repeated several times; and then he felt sure. He answered by a little whine, and started off in the direction of the noise. Some way he went, and then, uncertain of the exact direction, halting, he gave another little whine, and at once "tap, tap"

came the answer, so on he went, the tap, tap being repeated at intervals until he had rejoined his mother.

Then not a moment was wasted, and off they all three started, up and up to the head of the nullah, where they turned westward and continued to travel up the main valley all night. In this manner, moving from village to village, finding mulberries, and cherries too in places, they waxed fat and strong throughout July. Their mother's coat was very poor indeed, for she felt the heat greatly; but the cubs' hair was as soft and thick as ever, and they did not seem to go into summer fur at all this first year.

At the end of July there came a time when food was rather scarce. Mulberries were over and walnuts were not ripe, and only in places were "gooch berries" ripening. Whatever berries they did find ripe, combined with the "surum-ganda" root, which was rather a luxury than a staple food, ants' nests, and, if they were very lucky, wild honey, formed their chief diet until the Indian corn was ready for them. This came in the middle or end of August. When the grains in the corn cobs were large and soft and milky, then bears began to troop down towards the habitations of man from all the higher valleys.

In places too even snow bears came down to the jungles near some upland village to feast on the Indian corn, and occasionally to rob some apple-tree by way of a change of diet. But it was on the Indian corn that the black bears set their faith, to put on to their bodies the store of fat which they required for the coming winter. In September it was, when the corn was being cut, that a great calamity befell our family of bears, and it was in this wise it occurred.

CHAPTER VI

THE "HONK"[1]

ALL night the bears had been feeding in the Indian corn, eating much and trampling down more, though they did not move about much when they had established themselves in a field that was to their liking. The only difficulty and danger was to get into the field; once in there, the high-standing maize, eight or ten feet high in fertile soil, gave them magnificent cover, in which they knew they held an advantage over any aggressor. As soon as it grew dark, the whole valley twinkled with numbers of fires lighted to keep off the bears, and from each "machan,"[2] built either in a field on four uprights, or as a mere shelter on the flat roof of a house, came shouts and whistles, and even the blowing of horns. Once well inside the cornfield, the bears cared not a straw for these noises, for any old bear knows well enough what these noises are, and also that they are made to frighten him away. He knows, too, that beyond making a noise and throwing stones, the man on the "machan" will do nothing, so he just goes into a corner of the field where the stones flung at him won't reach him, and where the smoke from the fire, if there be one, will not get up his nose.

There were also other noises and contrivances made to scare her away, which our old mother bear knew too

[1] "Honk": a drive or beat, from "hankna," to drive.

[2] Machān: Hindustani word for a platform built in a tree or elsewhere for sitting up over a kill or for a gun to sit in during a beat.

well to bother much about. There was the old kerosine oil-tin with a stone inside it, tied on a pole, and a rope leading from it either to a "machan," or perhaps even into a house some seventy or eighty yards away. Then again there was the slab of wood fixed on to two uprights, with another log of wood, so arranged on strings that, like the oil-tin, it could be worked from a distance and make a clatter every time the string was pulled.

Now it so happened that one night there came none of these fearsome noises from the fields on the south side of the valley, for had not the Sahib given orders to the "Lumberdar"[1] to see that the bears were not disturbed that night? Up all the side nullahs on the north side of the valley there was, however, more than the usual pandemonium.

On the south side there were four beats which were fairly easy to manage, whereas on the north side of the valley the forest was so extensive and the undergrowth so thick that it was impossible to beat it without several guns and a very large number of beaters. Thus it was hoped that whatever bears there were in the vicinity would, on finding the fields on the north side in a state of uproar, feed peacefully in the undisturbed fields on the other side, and would, moreover, go at dawn to lie up in the smaller jungles on that side of the valley. Again a second night the same arrangement was carried out.

Soon after daybreak on the third day, two shikaris might have been seen going from field to field. In a patch of Indian corn near the edge of the jungle they came to a place where the corn was much trampled down, and a profusion of grainless corn cobs lay scattered around. They had already seen old tracks in several

[1] Lumberdar: village head-man.

places, but this was last night's work. The next thing to be done was to go round the field to see where the tracks entered it, and where again they left it. Yes, there in the upper corner, leading from the little path which ran along the edge of the jungle, were the tracks—the entering tracks with the night's dew heavy upon them, and the departing tracks over the dew-sodden ground, showing that the bears had left about daybreak. There were the footprints of three animals, two small and one much larger and heavier. From the size of the footprints of the cubs one might have thought them to be those of last year's cubs, and the fact that they had at times strayed a considerable distance from their mother showed that they must at any rate be well grown. But a young bear has a large head and large feet for his size, and if born in the spring would, by the time the Indian corn was ripe, be a good-sized, powerful little animal.

There were two guns, and by ten o'clock they were in their places. The "stops" had been carefully placed and the beaters were ready to start "honking"; and at the given signal began to advance, hooting, shouting, and whistling all along the line. As yet the beaters were afar off, and although the bears heard it they did not pay much attention to it, thinking it to be a marriage or some tamasha going on in the village below; but as the line of beaters topped a rise above the nullah in which they lay, the fearsome noise fell full upon their ears, and then the old bear knew that it was a "honk."

Now was the time to exert all her cunning in order to save herself and her two cubs. For a while she stood listening to the noise, and having ascertained whence it came, she made off diagonally uphill. The beaters were still a long way behind. She did not go fast, but crept through the bushes almost like a cat, followed by her

cubs. Near the top of the hill she struck a jungle trail which she knew led over a dip in the ridge and down into the extensive jungle on the far side; and this dip she had almost reached when there came from in front of her the sound of a man tapping on a tree with a stick, and a voice said "Khabar dār hārpat! Hārpat, khabar dār!"[1] Even then she made very little noise as she turned down the hill, and for a few paces only had the man heard the sound of heavy footfalls and the swishing of bushes: and then again all was silent as far as the bears were concerned.

Now she went along the face of the hill for some distance, and then worked her way up again towards the main ridge. Still more cautiously she proceeded this time, moving stealthily up a little water-course and stopping to look about her, listen, and sniff the air every few yards, until she reached the edge of the jungle, where she lay down amongst the thick bushes, seeing without being seen, her cubs—who had at first treated the matter as rather a joke, but now thoroughly frightened—crouching beside her. As she lay there she could at first see nothing, for her eyes were not very good and there was a glare outside; but suddenly her acute nose detected a slight taint in the air; very slight, for it was only a stray puff of cross wind that had borne it to her, and from all round her came the scent of man. But this scent, one that she feared instinctively, was different to that which she knew well and which informed her of the presence of Kashmiri wood-cutters and their kind. Only once or twice before had she met with it, but it was connected in her mind with danger, and to her keen nose was as different to the scent of a Kashmiri as the Kashmiri's face is to our eyes different from a Sahib's. Then something moved in the front of her,

[1] Kashmiri: look out, a bear!

drawing her attention to what she had not noticed until it moved, and had at first thought to be all tree-trunk, but now she saw the lower part of a man's legs against the tree. No more could she see, for the rest of his body was hidden by the bushes over her; but it was enough, too much, in fact, for her! Quickly she crept away, and the Sahib saw nothing, though he did once hear the cracking of a dry twig, which made his heart leap with expectation.

Now the bears went straight downhill again. She had made up her mind: she must try and break back through the beaters. She chose a piece of sloping ground where the bushes grew very thick, and there she lay down with her cubs crouched beside her, determined to remain quite still until the coolies were almost on top of her, and then make a dash for it, for once before had she escaped like this, and once before had she been shot at when she had allowed herself to be driven straight forward by the beaters. Nearer and nearer came the fiendish yelling and beating of tom-toms, and more and more restless became the cubs; till at last one of them could stand it no longer and turned to make off. In a flash she was after him, and he had not gone five yards when he was rolled over and given such a smack that he uttered a sharp little bark of surprise and pain. They all three crouched down again, but alas! that one little bark was the beginning of their undoing; for the beaters had heard, and had roughly located the sound, which seemed to come from a spot but a short distance in front of them. At once the noise increased fourfold, and the cry of Khabar dār, hārpat; khabar dār!" went the whole way down the line; but the men did not quite like it, and the advance hung fire.

A man who had clambered up a tree in order to get a better view (and perhaps with a view to safety!) now

shouted to his comrades to maintain their line and to go on shouting and throwing stones. From his safe perch he could afford to encourage bravery. Yes: "Shabash bahadure!" "Shabash!"[1] Throw stones! throw bits of wood, anything you can lay hand upon into the thick bushes in front, that's where they are! Encouraged by these directions, the men redoubled their efforts, and it was not long before missiles of all sorts and sizes came hurtling into the bushes where the bears lay. Even if the old bear could have stood it, it was more than the cubs could face, and they both took to their heels as fast as they could, followed by their mother. The man up the tree saw them, and at once shouted out "Khabar dār! khabar dār! dré hārpat hūr iwān shuh!"[2] to warn the guns to keep a sharp look-out, whereupon the other beaters became, if possible, more vociferous than before; pouring forth a stream of abuse for the most part reflecting on the morals of the bears' female relations, past and future, unto the third and fourth generation; and slowly the honk moved forward. Now the Sahibs were on tenter-hooks of expectation; there were three bears in the beat, and surely they must come out now, for were not the coolies already within a hundred yards? Very slowly and cautiously the line moved forward, those who had axes holding them ready to strike at any moment, for the bear might still try and charge back through the line.[3]

Even at this crisis the old bear had not lost her head, though a great fear gripped her heart. She tried one place, but saw a Sahib standing in front of her, keen and alert, rifle in hand; so she went on silently just inside

[1] Bravo! my brave ones, bravo!

[2] Kashmiri, look out, look out, three bears have gone uphill.

[3] It has been my experience that she-bears, whether with or without cubs, move much more stealthily than male animals.

the edge of the jungle, screened by the thick bushes. Who would have thought that such a big, heavy animal could have moved so silently through the undergrowth! To the edge of the bushes she again crawled, *ventre à terre*. She saw that she was now just about half-way between the two guns, and that the only chance of safety was to make a dash across a little level grass plot, and gain the shelter of the other jungle some twenty yards distant. But what a meagre chance!

The coolies were almost on top of her, some of them just coming out of the jungle. One of the Sahibs, who was new to the game, began to unload his rifle, saying to his Shikari as he did so that those fools of beaters had let the bears break back; but the words were scarcely out of his mouth when out came the bear at full gallop. The other gun, an old hand, who knew that a beat is never over until the last man is out of the jungle, was ready for her and fired, the poor old bear falling dead just as she had almost reached the shelter she was making for. At the same time, and but a little behind their mother, out dashed the two cubs, who, by taking a slightly different line, passed within a few yards of the other gun as he was hurriedly trying to reload, and disappeared into the bushes under his very nose.

Thus it was that two cubs lost their mother!

Dead bear.

Settlement of Gujars.

CHAPTER VII

A JUNGLE TRAGEDY

The moon, nearly full, had already almost set away in the west, dipping behind the hills of Kagan and the Black Mountain country, but still shed sufficient light to make objects in the jungle clearings easily discernible. A keen listener at watch near one of the open patches in the jungle might at this time have heard a twig snap and a sound of stealthy digging and heavy breathing somewhere amongst the bushes along the opposite side of the clearing. Then all was silence but for the far-off cry of a jackal and the crowing of some wakeful cock in the village.

Presently, without further sound, a big black form stole silently out of the bushes and across the clearing in the moonlight. It was a large black bear. He waddled along with his head down, looking this way and that on the ground in hopes of finding some succulent root or grass. Finding nothing to his liking, he followed the cattle track which led down towards the stream and the village.

There was no doubt about it; food was scarce: the mulberries were over and the Indian corn not yet ripe, nor were the "gooch" berries or walnuts plentiful. In fact, just at this time there was nothing much but a few roots and grasses in the jungles, and perhaps a few unripe pears near some of the villages. True, he had had a good meal off a young bullock about a week ago, but since he had taken to killing cattle, the villagers,

happy-go-lucky Kashmiris though they were, had driven their herds into the villages at sunset where it was impossible to get at them.

Now the bear was on his way home, to lie up for the day in the vast forests on the lower slopes of the Kaji Nag range; that is to say, he had to cross the stream, get past the village, and clear of the open cultivated fields before daybreak. He knew he might meet a stray bullock near the village, and then, well! He had killed a good many before, and had no objection to trying another. When first he had taken to cattle killing he had always been rather afraid, and dreaded the consequences; but now he had become callous. In fact, so accustomed had he now become to meat diet that he could scarce do without it.

Meditating, perhaps, somewhat in this manner, he came to the edge of the jungle. He stopped short some ten or fifteen paces from the actual edge, so that he could see out without being seen. All this time he had been moving silently along like a big black ghost, with his eyes and nose to the ground searching for food; now he stood with head stretched forwards and nose uplifted, moving his head slowly from side to side as he sniffed the cool night air. Suddenly his ears were pricked forward and then laid tight back as he sank silently into the grass, and seemed to become but one quarter of his former size. As he lay there, his eyes now glowing like two red-hot coals, he again sniffed the tainted air; this was enough to convince him, and he slank silently out of sight back into the shade of the forest.

About a hundred yards from where we last saw the bear, but a little distance from the edge of the jungle, lay a black bullock peacefully chewing the cud. He was a fine young bullock, strong and full-grown, and had cost his owner forty silver rupees last autumn. He

had slipped out of the village during the night, and crossed the stream to feed on the lush grass along its banks. Now the moon had set, and it would soon be dawn; he had fed all night in the moonlight, and was now drowsily chewing the cud without any thought of danger from the jungle so close behind him.

Suddenly there was a rush! Terrified, he started to his feet, but alas! too late, for he had only half risen when the bear hurled himself upon his back, biting and tearing at his hump. Fear and pain gave him the strength of a mad thing, and once he threw his adversary off and regained his feet; but in vain was this mighty effort, for he had scarce taken two paces forward when he was again seized. Then a mighty struggle ensued, and the silence of the night was disturbed by frantic roars and bellowings of fear and rage. He kept his feet and struggled along towards the stream. The bear had seized him round the neck and shoulders with his fore-paws, and his teeth were firmly fixed in the fleshy part of his hump. As yet the bear's hind-feet were on the ground and being used, as it were, as a brake. Thus they struggled forward for fifty or sixty yards. When he felt the struggles of the bullock becoming weaker, he vaulted, almost like a man, on his back, fixing the sharp claws of his hind-feet on either flank, just where the hind-legs meet the body. The bullock staggered under the enormous weight, lurched forward for ten or a dozen stumbling paces, and then fell exhausted in the shallow stream, whence the bear dragged him apparently without effort on to a small patch of sand and stones in the middle.

Devilish cunning and brute strength had conquered. There had been no lightning death stroke as when the tiger kills, nor even the leopard's relentless grip upon the throat, and now without further attempt to kill his

victim outright, the bear commenced his ghastly meal off the powerless but still living animal.[1]

[1] The cruelty of this jungle tragedy will be fully realised when I say that on going to the kill many hours later I found the poor bullock still alive, though almost the whole of his hump had been eaten off, so that three of the vertebræ were entirely laid bare. He was quite helpless and could not move, and was, we may imagine, waiting in an agony of suspense for darkness, when the bear would return to him.

CHAPTER VIII

RETRIBUTION

It was not until nearly ten o'clock that an old man from the village some three miles distant from my camp, brought the information that a bear had killed a bullock during the night, quite close to his village. Two Sikhs, going down to the stream at daybreak to perform their ablutions, had come upon the bear still at the kill. It was a huge animal!—I never yet met a Kashmiri who saw a *small* bear!—and was worthy of the Sahib's attention.

I started off with my shikari to investigate the matter, and the tragedy related in the foregoing pages was the story I read from the tracks on the ground. Starting from the carcass of the unfortunate bullock, which was lying on a little patch of stones in the bed of the stream, we commenced working backwards. There were the marks where the poor beast had finally collapsed near the edge of the stream; then the staggering foot-prints of the bullock alone deep in the soft soil, showing too where he had once come to his knees and recovered himself, borne down by the weight of the gnawing, tearing fury on his back. And here, for perhaps as much as twenty yards, the tracks of the plunging bullock with those of the bear's hind-feet alongside in two continuous slides, showing how he had used his hind-feet as a drag, and so on to the spot where the unfortunate victim had been lying at first, peacefully chewing the cud. From that spot to the edge of the

jungle the bear's tracks were plain on the dew-sodden ground, but once inside the jungle the tracking was not so simple. However, the shikari, who was a good deal better than the usual run of Kashmiri shikaris at tracking, soon worked back to the place where the bear had first come to the edge of the forest, and thence back to the open glade.

Near the kill on the edge of the stream stood a willow tree, and in this I determined to build a "machan." Telling the shikari to see to this, and to place a sentry over the kill to keep off village dogs and vultures, I returned to camp.

About 5 o'clock I got into the machan with the shikari. It was cloudy, and I feared it would be a dark night, but I decided to sit up simply for the interest of the thing, rather than in hopes of shooting the bear in the dark. Very little of the carcass had been eaten, from which I judged that the bear had only killed just before he was disturbed by the two Sikhs at dawn, and that he would accordingly be hungry and return to his meal early. Owing to the proximity of the village, however, it was not to be expected that he would before it was quite dark. Before mounting the machan I slightly altered the position of the kill; I knew how bear usually commenced to feed—that is to say from the hump of a bullock. I thought, too, that he would probably prefer to lie on dry ground rather than in the water, so I placed the carcass so that the bear would be obliged to lie approximately in one given spot if my surmise proved correct. In this spot he would probably offer a broadside shot, and would show up against the white sand and shingle of the little island; having done this, I filled my pockets with pebbles and mounted the machan.

I had given orders that all the village dogs were to

be shut up, but I felt sure the jackals would arrive early at the kill, and I was not mistaken, for it was barely dusk when one appeared like a silent shadow on the far bank. I then prepared for some fun. He looked up stream, he looked down stream, and he looked intently at the carcass. All seemed to be safe. He ran along to a spot where the bank was lower, and I heard a plop! as he jumped down and a plash! plash! plash! as he came through the shallow water. When within five or six yards of it, he stood still in the water and had another good look at it. Yes, it seemed to be quite dead. It must be all right. But still all caution must not be dispensed with. So he circled round it twice, stopping every now and then to take another good look, and sometimes darting away from it suddenly as if he thought it was going to kick. No, it did not move, so, still with caution, he approached from behind.

Two or three times he came within a foot or so of the outstretched tail and dashed back in alarm; then very cautiously and slowly, step by step, he drew near until, with neck stretched forward to its utmost, his nose was within an inch or two of that tempting tail. He seemed to be playing a self-inflicted game of Tantalus! His forefeet would not advance, nor would his neck extend that extra inch or two necessary to allow his mouth to reach the prize. But wait! There is a sudden dash forward, and he has given a pluck at the tail with his teeth, and has jumped back again like a flash, well out of reach; and now he is again standing there looking at it.

All this time Dost Mahomed, who has a keen sense of humour, was sitting beside me with his eyes sparkling and a dirty rag which he called his handkerchief stuffed in his mouth. This handkerchief (he only had one as

far as I know), he considered the height of civilisation; but it was a source of constant amusement and chaff—mingled doubtless with a little jealousy—to the other men in camp, and was known as Dost Mahomed's "dajji." But that is another story. For some minutes past I had felt his sides heaving with suppressed laughter, and fearing that the famous "dajji" would soon fail to cork up his effervescing mirth, I sent a stone whizzing at the jackal; it did not hit him, but all the same I fancy he was at the moment the most scared jackal in Asia. Then the "dajji" was removed, and Dost Mahomed and I both indulged in a good quiet laugh.

Our laughter was scarcely at an end when another jackal arrived, and after going through the same pantomime for our benefit, was put to an ignominious flight in the same manner. When the next jackal put in an appearance it was nearly dark, and I considered it was too risky to throw any more stones, so after going through the same manœuvres he was allowed to start feeding. By this time it was dark, the moon hidden by heavy clouds. I could just make out the dead bullock, a dark, indistinct mass against the stones; the jackal I could not make out at all, though I could hear him at his meal. Before it became quite dark I had settled myself in the machan in such a way that, on bringing my rifle up to the shoulder with an elbow on each knee, the rifle was straightway brought to bear upon the spot in which I had calculated the bear would be; it was quite a comfortable position, and I hoped to be able to maintain it without moving if the bear arrived early.

As we sat there it became darker and darker, and a faint rumble of thunder was borne to us from afar off, probably the reverberant echoes of some heavy storm sweeping up the Kagan valley towards Chilas.

Up to this time our eyes had been doing all the

work, but now it was our ears that took upon themselves the foremost duties; there was scarcely sufficient air current to stir the leaves on the trees, and the faintest of night sounds became audible as we strained our ears to the utmost of their powers. And what a fascination these night sounds have! It may be that the Kashmir jungles do not afford quite as much interest at night as do the forests of Central India and the Terai, but all the same there is plenty of interest for those that have ears to hear and understanding to read the sounds aright.

From far up the valley comes to us faintly the barking of village dogs from the next village, for here there is but little fear of panthers, and the dogs wander about all night.[1] And now it is a jackal that makes night hideous with his plaintive wail, his cry being taken up by another and yet another, and passed along until the last answering cry comes so faintly to us that, but for the exceptional stillness of the night, it would not reach us at all, so great is the distance. But the jackal close beneath us is far too busy with his meal to answer the call of his friends; we only know he is there because we can distinctly hear him plucking and pulling at the hind-quarters of the dead animal.

The owls, too, not to be outdone by the jackals, have now started their nightly chorus, and a soft "twit-twoo" is repeated from tree to tree all round us, far more melodious than the obstinate and incessant cry of the nightjar, who will go on and on as if he were paid by the hour.

Poor nightjar! he seems to have an evil reputation in

[1] It is noticeable that where panthers are numerous, the dogs of the place, who well know what they have to fear, go into the houses in the evening of their own accord, and nothing will induce them to go out until morning.

all lands, in spite of the fact that he is perfectly harmless; in one place he is said to be a witch, in another he is said to ruthlessly murder the young and steal the eggs of poor inoffensive little birds, and in most places he is accused of stealing milk from the cows and goats. And all because he has a big ugly mouth and flits about silently at night, and in the evening may sometimes be seen flying about amongst the cows and goats as they are driven home, simply because he knows that these beasts will be sure to have flies about them, and will disturb nice fat moths and insects as they trample through the grass and bushes. Poor misjudged bird! but I do wish he had not got such an offensive voice.

All along the little stream below us the frogs are croaking merrily, and from every branch and leaf, and from every grass and fern, comes the chirruping and humming of countless crickets and other insects. Ah! the jackal has gone, I can no longer hear him eating. I did not hear him go!

However, I am mistaken, for almost at once the noise of greedy feeding commences again. But in a little while I think to myself, "Hallo! surely that is not the feeding of a jackal I hear," and as if in answer to my self-questioning, there comes the noise of a bone being crunched. I turn my head slowly towards Dost Mahomed, and I can just make him out in the dark as he leans forward, straining his eyes towards the kill. But it needs no answer on Dost Mahomed's part to tell me that the noise we hear is no jackal feeding, for now the bear is feeding in real earnest. His appetite has doubtless come with eating, and he is gnawing and tearing in his noisy gluttony. Such is the noise that Dost Mahomed thinks that he can whisper "Bhalu" with impunity, in answer to my inquiring look. But I am already straining every nerve to make out the bear.

Yes, the indistinct black mass below does seem to look bigger than it did before, and to extend further to the right; that is all I can make out. Now I catch a slight movement two or three times, evidently the beast throwing up his head as he swallows great lumps of flesh. How he got there I haven't a notion. I heard nothing and I saw nothing. He must have come through some shallow water and over some shingle; but not the slightest sound did he make in doing it; the only obvious fact was that he was there all right, and, as it was, I could hardly see him at all.

I placed my elbows on my knees and raised my rifle; I could see nothing, so I lowered it again. I had another good look at the place, and again caught sight of the movement of the head; he was, as far as I could make out, just where I had expected him to be. Again I placed my elbows on my knees, and this time raised my rifle very slowly. I could just make out the muzzle against the white stones; I raised it slowly until I lost sight of it, and then, knowing that I was on to either bear or bullock, fired.

The flash of the rifle blinded me entirely, and from the moment of firing I saw nothing more; however, the flash which blinded me apparently enabled Dost Mahomed to see something, for he at once whispered "He's hit!" As I say, I saw nothing, but what I heard was this—a splashing in the water, and then a big splash from the opposite bank a little to our right; then a sound of an animal jumping off the far bank to the left into the water, and coming splash, splash through the water towards us. This mystified me entirely, and my first thought was that our friend the bear had spotted us and was going to pay us a visit in the machan. I could make out nothing, but I held the rifle ready to fire if he did come up the tree. He climbed

out of the stream just below our tree, and I heard him shaking the wet from him, just like a big dog coming out of the water. Our willow tree was thick and bushy, but we were not more than ten feet from the ground at most, so that the bear could not have been more than five yards from us, but in spite of this I could see nothing. Having given himself a good shake, he trotted off behind us.

At this moment Dost Mahomed whispered to me "Two bears," which I knew must be the case, as I now heard the first one going through the water down stream. Then there was a scrambling noise, and some gurgling and panting as he climbed up the bank lower down. And soon men were seen coming with torches from the village, but, as we still heard a wheezing and coughing noise from the direction of a big walnut tree on the far side, we shouted to them to come carefully from behind us as there was a wounded bear about still. They came holding their torches aloft to throw the light further afield, and I sat ready with the rifle; but the bear had apparently gone off, for we neither saw nor heard anything more.

It was impossible to do anything more in the dark, so we started back for camp as soon as we had been helped down from the machan. There was great joking and questioning about the affair. I could say nothing more definite than that from the noise I had heard, I judged the bear to be hard hit; but Dost Mahomed stoutly maintained that he had seen everything plainly, and that the bear was well hit in the body. His old father, a shikari of many years' experience, and who had become a privileged person through the years of good service he had given me, could not resist "pulling my leg." "Why, Sahib," said he, "you missed a red bear the other evening in the dusk and put it down to failing

light, and now you ask me to believe that you have shot a bear in the pitch dark!"

As we walked home, I asked Dost Mahomed what he had seen. He said that by the flash of the rifle he saw that the bear was hit, and at the same time saw a small bear sitting up on its haunches like a big dog, on the far bank, afraid to come any nearer but determined to wait until the big bear had eaten his fill. On being hit, the bear fell down, but recovering himself made for the bank and tried to climb up it, but fell back into the water. This evidently was the first big splash I heard. The small bear, not liking the looks of his friend, and thinking he would be safer on the opposite side of the stream, jumped down—the second splash I had heard—crossed the stream, landed just under our tree, and went off behind us. The wounded animal, being unable to climb up the steep bank where he had first essayed it, came down stream and climbed out farther down by means of a fallen tree-trunk. After that he saw no more. Of course I, being the actual firer, was more dazzled by the flash of the rifle than Dost Mahomed; but his seeing all this in the dark shows how very much better natives are at seeing at night than we civilised Europeans are.

Next morning, returning to the spot at daylight, I verified from the tracks and blood-marks all that Dost Mahomed said he had seen, and found he was quite correct in every detail. The bear, bleeding freely, had crossed the rice-fields bordering the stream and made his way to a nullah in which the undergrowth was very thick, before he died. We found him stone dead about a mile from the spot where he was first hit. He was a very fine animal, with a splendid coat, a most surprising fact considering his fondness for meat diet and the season of the year. As we were laughing

and talking over him, the old shikari, pointing to the bullet mark just in the right place behind the shoulder, said, "Well, this time a blind man has caught a quail," to which I replied, "Certainly, but at any rate it is a fine big quail!" this phrase being in Hindustani the nearest equivalent to our slang expression, "That *was* a fluke!"

CHAPTER IX

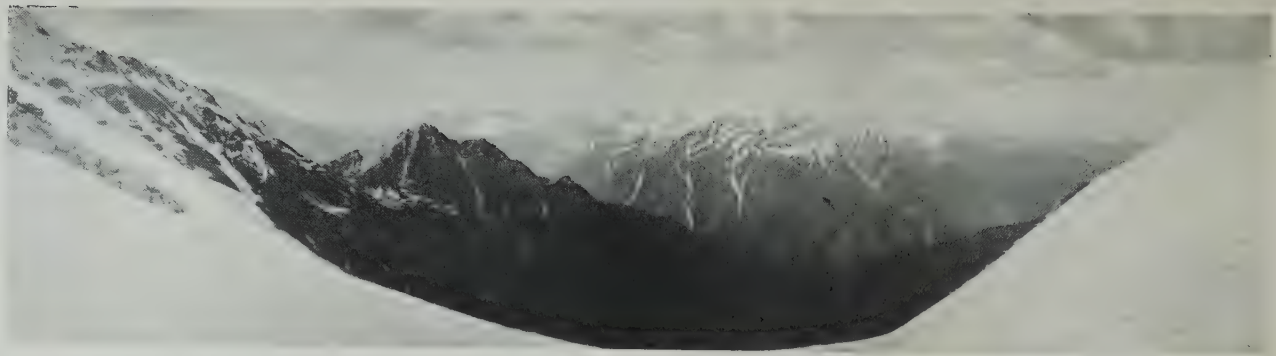
BEYOND THE VALE

HAVING touched lightly upon the legends and sport of Kashmir proper, let us move towards another part of the Maharajah's dominions, a portion even less civilised than the Vale of Kashmir itself. Let the time be early summer, before myriads of mosquitoes have come to life on the Wular Lake to torment us in their maddening swarms at sunset, and before the last patches of snow have melted from the Rajdiangan Pass. From this pass, following one of the most picturesque roads in the world, we may drop down into the beautiful Gurais Valley, and, if we are folks of leisure, spend some time there, whilst waiting until the snow has sufficiently disappeared from the passes beyond to allow us to take our ponies over them with us. These days of waiting may be spent shooting or fishing, or merely "lazing," in scenes of ever-changing loveliness.

Beyond Gurais, when at last we do decide to move forwards, we find that two routes lay open to us; the more general one over the Burzil Pass, and the less used, but certainly more beautiful one, over the Kamre Pass. The latter holds the advantage of offering from its summit a superb view in either direction; whereas the Burzil, except for a pretty peep back towards Minnimarg, gives us no view at all. So let us by all means take the Kamre. If it be a fine day, we may from the top of the Kamre obtain our first view of Nanga Parbat, after admiring which we may sit down

and take a glissade down the steep snow slope which we find on the north side of the pass: an easy mode of descent, much to our advantage and enjoyment, but greatly to the detriment of our nether garments. At the same time we must take care that our pony men do not send our kit down in the same way, as they are very fond of doing, removing the loads from the ponies, and letting them walk unladen down the zigzag track to pick up their loads, which have sped down the slope with lightning speed, and many jumps and bumps, in front of them. This method may be easy for the ponies, and great fun for the pony men, but it certainly does not improve our kit! Having got safely down the snow slope, we bear sharply round to the right, and, after going for a few miles through slushy snow and mud, find ourselves in camp at Kalapani, on comparatively dry ground.

Patches of snow lie here and there in drifts, and a big snow bridge spans the rushing Kamre stream; on the left bank rocky crags rise steeply above the higher snow slopes, divided by a belt of thick birch forest from the emerald green slopes of fresh young grass which run down to the stream. The right bank is more bare, but here and there is a patch of birch jungle, and sweeping down to our camp are the same green grass slopes on which we may find multitudes of flowers. Almost without moving from where we stand, we may see irises of every shade, from deep purple to white; forget-me-nots which wink at us like little blue eyes reflecting the colour of the skies above; bell-like fritillaries, sombre in colour, yet beautiful in their rich veining, and graceful in their slender growth; kingcups by the brook, forcing their way up even through patches of soft melting snow in their haste to open their petals to the warm, life-giving sun. These,



View from Kamre.

Astor.

and many others, delight us, giving promise of a still more luxurious flower harvest to come, when blue Himalayan poppies, delphiniums and monkshoods, wild roses, Canterbury bells, colombines, and all the host of later summer flowers shall take their place.

The Gujars have not yet arrived with their flocks of goats and sheep from Kashmir, Swat, and Kagan, and even the Punjab, so that all this beauty is a scene of lovely solitude. To us the solitude perhaps rather adds than otherwise to the pure beauty of the place; but it must have inspired very different feelings in the hearts of those who first gave this spot its name.[1] One may almost picture to oneself the arrival here of those poor wretches, sentenced to penal servitude: it might be for murder or theft, or it might be on false evidence purchased by some more wealthy rival, or perhaps merely for slaughtering a bullock during the winter to feed a starving family—a heinous crime in the eyes of their Hindu rulers. Hustled by their Dogra guards to the top of the pass, they may well have turned to take a last look at the beautiful country in which lay their homes and friends, never to be seen again; and as they dipped down below the crest of the hill, and fair Kashmir became lost to their view, it might indeed seem to them that Nature's ponderous gates had closed behind them, shutting them off for ever from hearth and home and all that had previously been "life" to them. With such sad thoughts would they march on down to the place where they were to camp for the night, and where, sitting round a fire, they might well say to one another with Oriental resignation, "Now indeed are we in Kalapani." And so it is that even now this

[1] Kalapani: exile or penal servitude. The name applied by natives to the Andamans, which are used as a penal settlement, and often applied to any out-of-the-way desert spot.

name Kalapani is the one by which this first camping-ground is designated.

But the full horror of their situation would not perhaps dawn upon them until, after crossing the dread Hattu Pir,[1] and descending into the desolate arid Bunji Plain, they were transported across the Indus. There indeed they might be killed, die of starvation, or, perhaps, be sold as slaves in Kashgar or Yarkand. Such a fate was doubtless frequently that of convicts in the old days, before the Maharajah's power was to any extent firmly established beyond the Indus; but there are still living several descendants of old convicts who met with better luck, and were able to settle down in the land of their exile; notably the grandsons of a Mahomedan butcher of Srinagar, who was caught out killing pariah dogs and selling the meat as mutton or goat!

Probably one of the quaintest convicts who ever crossed the passes and entered this penal settlement was a fine tabby cat! This cat was convicted of no less offence than that of killing and devouring a parrot and a pet myna belonging to the old Maharajah, and was sentenced to penal servitude for life. A very old officer of the Kashmir army told the writer that he remembered this cat in Bunji; and that it was allowed a ration of flour daily by the state. Such cases were not uncommon in old days, and I have myself been told of one other, though this did not occur in Kashmir. In this case, a dog playing in the courtyard of a native house ran against a big wooden pestle used for pounding grain, which in falling killed a baby sleeping underneath it. The dog and the pestle were both brought

[1] Hattu Pir: a hill overlooking the junction of the Astor River and the Indus, over which the old Kashmir-Gilgit road ran. It was a very severe climb, and very little water was available, so that the half-starved coolies in the train of the Kashmir armies died by the score.

before the judge, who convicted them both, and sentenced them to a term of hard labour.

As we wend our way down this lovely Kamre valley we catch frequent glimpses of the pure white crest of Nanga Parbat, raising its massive head above the intervening hills; but it is not until we reach Rampur, the spot where the Kamre stream, joining the dirty glacier waters of the Rupel, becomes the Astor River that Nanga Parbat bursts upon us in all its glory. Fifteen or sixteen thousand feet of pure snow and ice rise up in solemn grandeur straight before us, culminating in a pure white cone nearly twenty-seven thousand feet in height. Now in truth have we reached a veritable Devistan and Peristan, a land of Devs and fairies, of superstition and witchcraft. But perhaps one should say, a land which was once a veritable Devistan; for even in these remote regions the far-reaching hand of civilisation is extending its fingers and gradually driving out the fairies, the witchcraft, and the superstition. In the old days of our grandfathers, so the local inhabitants will tell us, fairies and spirits were to be seen and heard almost every day; but when the Maharajah's army first brought big guns with them into the country, the fairies were, by the noise of their discharge, driven to take refuge in the most remote spots, and upon the highest and most inaccessible peaks. Doubtless they still exist, and sometimes make their presence felt, but not with the frequency of the days of old.

There are, too, still a few Dainyals or witch-doctors, but mostly "of inferior quality," say the "laudatores temporis acti." This very year an old woman has died in Hunza who was a famous witch and prophetess, and even now there come down the Indus valley rumours of the marvellous doings of a Dainyal of Darot, in Baltistan, at the mention of whose name men shake their

heads and say, "Tobah! Tobah! such men are hard to find these days"! His latest exploit is the recovery of a boy who had been missing for three months, and who, when recovered, said that he had been carried away by the fairies and bewitched by them until released by the spells of the Dainyal, who apparently, like Signor Ruggieri, could—

> "Bring back a strayed cow, silver ladle, or spoon,
> And was thought to be thick with the man in the moon."

Elementary education, and a more complete understanding of the doctrines of the Mahomedan faith, have hit the Dainyals hard, for men are already beginning to look askance at their doings, and regard them as suspicious and contrary to the doctrines of the Faith. I have been told that the old Dainyals in their ceremonies used to cut the throat of a small black lamb, and as they danced, sucked the blood from the gushing wound, but that this practice was one of the first to give way before the march of Islam. Colonel Durand in his delightful book, *The Making of a Frontier*, has given a very graphic account of the dance of a Dainyal maiden, of which he himself was an eye-witness.

In connection with this he also makes mention of the many traces of Hinduism still to be observed in the manners and customs of the country; such as the abhorrence of cow's milk and chickens, the frequent use of the wood and leaves of the "chili"[1] (juniper) tree in various ceremonies. Nowadays cow's milk is regularly drunk, and fowls and eggs are kept and consumed; and the only way in which the old dislike of these things is shown is that there are still some families who, though they will use cow's milk, do not consider it equal to that of goats in purity. They keep separate utensils for the

[1] Chili: called "Shupa" in Baltistan.

milk of cows and goats, and maintain that, if the two are mixed, evil will assuredly befall their goats. One man who was somewhat broad-minded, determined to experiment with the mixing of the two kinds of milk, and told me an amusing story of the results of his experiments. Being still somewhat lacking in assurance, he determined to try on a small scale first, with the milk of one cow and a single goat.

These two animals he milked into a new bowl and then tied up for the night apart from the rest of his herds, lest any evil might ensue and involve the whole of his cattle. In the morning he went to see the two animals, and found the cow quite well, but the goat strangled by the cord with which it was tied! This was the first and last of his experiment.

As regards fowls, some men, who have large herds of goats, will not keep fowls at all, as they say that the latter bring bad luck to the goats. Otherwise, as far as I know, almost any man will keep fowls, and consume them and their eggs with the greatest relish.

The burning of the dead seems to have been a custom in vogue not so many generations ago; for the sites of the burning ghats have not been entirely forgotten. There must have been many of these places—called Jainkish—but the only one the writer has seen, in which ornaments and other remains are still sometimes found, is at Barmas near Damot.

The leaves and wood of the "chili" tree, which is so highly thought of by Hindus, are used in many ceremonies, such as those at births and marriages. This tree is also connected with another custom, still maintained by some, though fast falling into total disuse; a ceremony which is, I think, performed at the time when the herds are first driven up to the summer grazing grounds: and until this ceremony has been performed

no clarified ghi, milk, or butter may be sold or given away. In each flock there is one particular animal, elected or re-elected yearly, which the owner always regards as the best and favourite milch-goat of his herds. The first ghi made is placed in a new bowl and melted over a fire of "chili" wood, and when melted, a small branch of the same tree is dipped into it, set fire to, and then extinguished sufficiently to prevent there being any actual flame, but at the same time allowed to smoke freely. The smoking branch is then passed over and round the body of the chosen animal, so that it is entirely purified by the smoke. The remnant of this special ghi, which is called Shiridup, is then rubbed on the forehead and the horns of the goat; and small green branches of "chili" may also be tied to the horns. This done, the animal is established definitely as the chosen of the flock, is known as "Ghiligarhi," and will never be sold, however tempting be the price offered. The fates have now been propitiated, and from that day forward there is no restraint in the sale of ghi or milk until the same season in the ensuing year.

Again, we find amongst these interesting mountaineers that which, for want of a better name, we may call the Greek element; quaint old festivals and characteristic traits, such as the love of flowers and wine, dancing and music, which cannot but remind us of the people of Nysa near Mount Meros, who came forth to meet Alexander the Great, garlanded with flowers, dancing and singing to drum and panpipe, and claiming to be descendants of Dionysos. And last but not least, there are the claims of more than one chieftain to be descended from the great conqueror, and the many local stories into which Alexander's name has been introduced. Let us not be such rigidly practical historians as to bring forward the ugly, disturbing fact that all

these stories and claims of descent are, for the most part, entirely contrary to the teachings of history; thereby dispelling the romance of the stories, and the illusions of the claimants. Let us rather take the stories as we find them, and try and make out whence these uneducated men of the Hindu Kush can have first obtained them.

Firstly, it may be noted that the people of the country maintain that Alexander did come as far as Tashkurgan and the Killik Pass, whence he sent an expedition down through Gujal and what is now Hunza to Gilgit. The commander of this force was to take over the country in Alexander's name and establish Governors, before passing on to Chitral and joining the main army at Dir. As far as the writer knows, there are no records of this expedition other than the beliefs of the people of Gilgit, but Alexander certainly did visit Dir, and established colonies in Gandhara; where the Greeks undoubtedly influenced the Græco-Buddhist or Gandhara sculptures, found in such quantities round Peshawur, Mardan, and throughout the Swat Valley. It is said that there are Buddhist remains in Darel, and if this is so, it will be interesting to see if they show the same signs of Greek influence as those of the Swat Valley. If this is the case, which may perhaps be proved before long, since the Rajah of Tangir and Darel has lately acknowledged the suzerainty of the British Raj, then surely it is not difficult to allow that accounts of Greek customs and habits may have reached the ears of the inhabitants of Gilgit through the medium of travellers, and doubtless lost nothing in the telling.[1]

[1] With regard to the influence of the Greeks upon architecture in upper India, Laurence, in his *Vale of Kashmir*, writes: "Indeed I have a suspicion that the distinctive mark of the Kashmirean style was well known to the Greeks; for an intercolumniation of four diameters, as an interval

Here at least we have sufficient grounds for thinking that the name, and something of the doings of Alexander, may have filtered through to these out-of-the-way parts, even if it be not true that a Greek force ever actually visited the country. This would be enough, at any rate, to prepare the minds of the people to receive with interest other legends of Alexander, which, it seems more than probable, they learned later from the Arabs, at the time when those faithful warriors of the crescent were fighting against the infidel hordes at Khotan and elsewhere, and establishing the Green banner of Islam throughout Kashgaria. In fact, it seems that through these Arabs these dwellers in one of the most inaccessible spots in the whole world may have heard stories which can scarcely have had any other origin than in the Greek of the pseudo-Callisthenes. The connection is, of course, not direct; but the similarity of so many points in the stories is remarkable, and the discrepancies are apparently not greater than those which exist between the Ethiopic version of the pseudo-Callisthenes and early Christian, Syrian, and Arabic stories of Alexander, which were probably based upon the same original.

Perhaps it may be of interest to examine some of these points of similarity in detail. Now, throughout the Gilgit agency one will hear Alexander the Great spoken of as Badshah-Sekunder-zul-Karnain, or Karnail; but none of those using the name seem to know its meaning, and some of whom I have made inquiries have given explanations almost as ingenious as they are incorrect. One man, pronouncing the name Karnail, said that Alexander was a great leader and conqueror,

seldom, if ever, used by themselves, was called Araio style, a name which would appear to refer to the intercolumniation, common amongst the Hindus or Eastern Aryas, the 'Apeioi of Herodotus.

and that "Karnail" was the same as our word "Colonel." Although almost every native in India pronounces "Colonel" as "Karnail," I fear we can trace no connection between this word, which should be "Kurnain," and "Coronel" or "Colonello" the leader of a column, the original form of Colonel. Yet another said that the title was really "Zir Karnain," and meant that Alexander (or his fame?) lived throughout a thousand "kârn," a kârn being the period of time which expires before the Mussulman fast of Ramzan once more occurs in the same month of the year, and commences and ends upon the same date, a matter of some thirty-five years, I believe.

The true form of the title seems to be "Zul Kurnain," and the meaning of it "Lord of the Two Horns." Almost all through the Ethiopic version of the pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander is spoken of as "the two-horned." For instance, when Alexander first determines to conquer the world he is represented as praying, "Thou knowest what is my soul, and thou hast magnified me amongst the nations and exalted me amongst the kings of the earth; and it is thou who hast made two horns to grow on my head, wherewith I may thrust down the kings of the earth."

Later on in the same book, the dying Alexander makes his will, and commences it with the words, "From Alexander the king, son of the God Ammon and Olympias, his mother." This description of himself as "Son of the God Ammon" is another link with the title "the two-horned," and opens up the question of the birth of Alexander, a question into the details of which we need not here enter. Suffice it to say, therefore, that there was a story current at one time to the effect that the god Ammon came to the court of Philip of Macedon in the form of a Magician, loved the Queen

Olympias, and became the father of Alexander. Now "the two-horned" is one of the titles of the Egyptian god Ammon, and he is always represented as such in old Egyptian sculptures and paintings. The two Arab historians Al Makin and Abu Shaker ibn Al Rahib both mention the title the "two-horned," and say that people held very different opinions concerning the matter, some saying that in truth Alexander had two horns, and others that he was called the two-horned because he ruled over the two horns of the sun, from the east unto the west. So much for this title.

In the story of how Alexander comforted his mother, the local version of which is given later, we find not only the name "zul Kurnain" occurring, but also that the whole story, in the main, bears a distinct resemblance to the Ethiopic, Christian, and Arabic versions of the same. All these make Alexander write a letter to Olympias, and one of the Arabic writers gives the text of the letter thus:

"Know then, that we in this world are like unto this fleeting day, which succeedeth yesterday, and that the morrow of to-day will follow in the path of that which has passed away, even as it has also followed the track of that which has gone before. Do thou, oh lady, endue thyself with patient resignation as with a garment of strong iron and fear not neither be dismayed, nor cast down utterly. And do thou make a great feast and bid all men together to thee; and when they have assembled let a herald go round about saying, 'Let every man here upon whom trouble hath fallen not partake of this food;' then shalt thou discover that there is consolation in my words to thee."

No one partook of the food, and then Olympias became sure that there is no one in the world without sorrow, and was comforted. The Christian romance

gives much the same story, but in the Ethiopic version it is interesting to find that Alexander calls Aristotle to him, and orders him to write the letter.

Alexander's visit to the "Wells of the Water of Life" is a very favourite theme with all romancers, but it is quaint, though perhaps not surprising, to find it occurring here in the Hindu Kush, fitted in with another local legend so as to form a part of it. Again we find that both the Arab writers mentioned above have given a version of the story. Abu Shaker tells us that one Matun first visited the Wells of the Water of Life, and informed Alexander of their whereabouts; but that the latter failed to reach them himself. Al Makin also mentions that Alexander entered a "Land of Darkness," and that he and his followers rode upon mares having young foals, which they left behind, so that the mares found their own way back to their foals. It is in one of these expeditions, too, that Alexander meets "the Angel who had charge of the earth, and held fast the mountain that encircled earth as with a ring," [1] and much to his surprise is greeted by the Angel as "the two-horned."

There is another legend extant in Gilgit, though not, as far as the writer is aware, connected in any way with Alexander. This is the legend of "Sangali Weon," a place not far from Gilgit, in the direction of Bagrot. In this spot there is supposed to have once been a gold chain hanging down to earth from the skies. Any persons suspected of wrong-doing or falsehood were taken to "Sangali Weon," and, holding the chain, made to swear that they were innocent or that their statements were true. The discerning chain would then point out the man if he was guilty, by descending upon his neck.

[1] This is the mythical mountain Al Kaf in which is a certain gap. The light filtering through this gap causes the false dawn and the sunset glow.

It is said that a certain clever rogue once played a trick upon the chain, which so disgusted it with human duplicity that it disappeared for good and all. This man had stolen a small quantity of gold from a friend, who suspected him, and insisted upon his coming to Sangali Weon to swear that he had not got the gold. The thief, having melted the gold down, poured it into a hollow walking-stick which he carried with him. Arrived before the chain, he said to his accuser and former friend, "Just hold my stick whilst I lay my hands upon the chain and take my oath that I have not got your gold." Thus, giving the stick with the gold inside it into the hands of the original owner of the gold, he caught hold of the chain, and swore that he had not the metal in his possession, and that his accuser was lying, as he doubtless had it himself; whereupon the indignant chain of justice was whisked away into the clouds and never seen again.

So far nothing about Alexander in the Gilgit story of this wonderful chain, but curiously enough the Ethiopic version of the pseudo-Callisthenes tells us that when Alexander came to Babylon he sought out and collected together the wonders which Solomon the son of David had made. There were eight wonders in all, and the sixth wonder is thus described: "There was in the temple at Jerusalem a chain which knew and could discern the difference between righteous men and sinners." The writer goes on to tell how a certain man deposited some gold with a Jew, and when he would recover it the Jew denied that he had ever received it. The owner of the gold called upon the Jew to swear before the chain of justice in the temple that he had not got the gold; and the Jew, to avoid discovery, melted the gold and hid it in a hollow stick. Before swearing his innocence he put down the stick, but the

angry chain, detecting the fraud, lifted itself up high above him in the air. Here, then, we have Gilgitis telling a story and pointing out a well-known place in their own country where certain events are said to have occurred precisely similar to those attributed by others many years ago to the temple at Jerusalem.

This seems too complex a problem to attempt to solve, so let us retrace our steps and take a good look up the Rupel Nullah at Dyamir, as Nanga Parbat is called by those who dwell in its shade. This grand mountain, on which the intrepid mountaineer Mummery lost his life,[1] cannot but be of interest to all Englishmen, apart from its own beauty and grandeur. What Tirich Mir is to Chitralis, Dyamir is to Gilgitis, Astoris, and Chilasis. It is the impregnable stronghold of the fairies, whose actual fortress is called Bathelo, and many a legend appertains to it. Of course, according to local belief it was the fairies who spirited away Mummery and his two Gurkha companions, and an old Dainyal, or witch of a certain village in the Indus valley towards Chilas, went so far as to foretell the event before the party started; so confident was she of the power of the fairies to defend their own.

Mention has been made already of Nanga Parbat in the legend of the Kali Nag, as being the home of the mate of the Kali Nag, so it is rather curious to find a Shina story about Nanga Parbat in which snakes play an important part. According to this tale, on the very top of the mountain there grows a "loozham," or coral tree, of which the seeds are coral beads. A certain Balti, living in Astor, once succeeded in climbing to the summit on which this tree grows, and filled his pockets with the coral beads, so much beloved and worn by the

[1] For an account of this expedition see Bruce's *Twenty Years in the Himalayas.*

women of the country. As he turned to leave, he perceived that from every direction, and every nook and cranny, an army of snakes was advancing upon him; darting over the snow with a speed which enabled them to keep up with him. Thinking their presence must have something to do with his robbing the "loozham" tree of its fruit, he commenced to empty his pockets as he ran, and was greatly relieved to find that the snakes stopped, picked up the corals, and went back quietly, each one carrying a bead in his mouth. But fear still gripped his heart, so he kept on running, and continued throwing away the corals until his pockets were quite empty; even then dread of the supernatural lent him strength and endurance, so that he did not stop to rest until he was safe within his own house, with the door shut. The next morning, after a long and refreshing sleep, he got up, but was rather dismayed to find, on opening the door, that there was a snake stretched out on the path in front of him. Hastily closing the door he thought the matter over, and came to the conclusion that there must be still one coral missing, of which this snake was the guardian; so he searched through all his pockets, but with no result—they were all empty! At last, however, he found the missing "loozham" stone in a fold of his clothes, and opening the door threw it to the snake, who immediately picked it up in his mouth and disappeared with it, greatly to the relief of the only man who has ever climbed to the top of Dyamir.[1]

Now as the clouds are gathering over the great peak, as they generally do as soon as the sun is well up, let us ride on through Gurikote to Astor, Hasora as the Dogras often call it. This place has a post and

[1] A somewhat similar story is also told of Rakaposhi, differing only in minor details.

telegraph office, and a commissariat store near the old fort, and has long been more or less in touch with civilisation; for as early as Ranjit Singh's time the then Rajah of Astor went down to Lahore to pay his respects to the Lion of the Punjab. Being on the high road from Kashmir to Gilgit and the Indus Valley, Astor has seen many an army of invasion pass, and has felt to the full the hardships of kār bégār (forced labour) and other vexations such as followed in the footsteps of the Kashmir armies of old. The "Pax Britannica" has to a certain extent eased the Astoris of these burdens, and freed them from the raids of the Chilasis and people of the lower Indus Valley; but the present Rajah, a boy of about seventeen years of age, is Rajah in little more than name to-day. He will most likely come to pay his respects when he hears that there are Sahibs in the rest-house, so let us take this chance of learning something of the descent and ancestors of this quiet, pleasant, though sad-faced boy.

CHAPTER X

HOW THE RAJAHS OF ASTOR CAME FROM BALTISTAN

In the days of long ago, when there was no ruler in Baltistan and the people lived in village communities, governed by unwritten laws and patriarchal sway, there dwelt there a maiden, by name Chuknari, whose beauty was the envy of every village damsel and the admiration of the youth of the country-side. Now Chuknari, "The Peach Blossom," was an orphan, and owned no nearer relative than the wise old lady who was her aunt. Though many men strove for her smiles, and were ready to lay their hearts and their fortunes at her feet, yet she would have none of them; but was impartial and kindly towards all, so that the girls of the village began to talk amongst themselves, saying: "See the pride of Chuknari; she will give herself in marriage to no man, and yet all the men follow after her and will not look at us; surely she is cunning, and they must all be her secret lovers."

But such words had no effect upon Chuknari, and blithely she sang to herself as she went about her work, and still she had a smile and a pleasant word for all.

But one summer, when the days were long and the grapes were ripe, and the melons promised luscious fruit in days soon to come, the old aunt, who was as a mother to "Peach Blossom," noticed that the girl was no longer bright and gay as heretofore, but seemed often wrapped in thought and filled with sighs. So she said to her,

"Tell me thy trouble, child, for I see that something ails thee." And Chuknari said, "A lover has stolen my heart, so that without him how can I be happy?" "And who is thy lover, and why dost thou not marry him and be happy?" asked the old lady. "Alas," said Chuknari, "that is my trouble: I love him, and yet I know not who he is, or whence he comes; for he comes to me softly by night, and before it is daylight he leaves me and disappears, as though he were a spirit. Tell me, oh Mai, how I may see his face by light of day, and know who he is and where I may find him?" And her aunt, who was old and very wise, said, "This is my counsel: close up tightly all the apertures of the house so that it is absolutely dark, and thus thy lover when he comes to thee will not know when day dawns, and in the daylight shalt thou see him!"

So Chuknari did as her aunt advised her, and with cloths and blankets made the room completely dark, so that no ray of light entered. And her lover came to her as before during the night, but when he heard a cock crowing without, he embraced her and said, "the cocks begin to crow and soon it will be dawn; I must go." But Chuknari reassured him, saying, "No, it is but some wakeful fowl that disturbs the peaceful night; see, it is still quite dark and no light enters from the window." So he was reassured, and stayed with Chuknari, for his heart desired to remain, though his wisdom had moved him to go. And when later he again began to feel uneasy, protesting that it must soon be dawn, Chuknari, feeling sure that it must now be light outside, snatched away the curtain from the darkened window that she might behold the form of her lover, and the sunlight streamed in, revealing to her the man. And with the sunlight came a voice saying, "Brak-Makpun, daylight has overtaken thee; thou hast no retreat and

must now remain as thou art!" But though the words were loud and clear, no man saw the speaker, for it was no human voice that spoke. Thus Brak-Makpun, who had been a fairy prince, became mortal man. And he married Chuknari, and because of his great wisdom, courage, and strength, and by the help of the fairies who doubtless befriended him, he became the first ruler of Baltistan, giving his name Brak-Makpun as a family name to his descendants, who bear it unto this day.

Brak-Makpun and his wife lived for many years, and from first being Ra of Skardu alone, he in time became the ruler of many lands; for in wisdom he was a veritable Naoshirowan, and in generosity and kindness of heart he rivalled Hatim Tai, so that from far up and down the Indus Valley and the Skyok River people came to him to settle their disputes and to obtain his advice and help in times of trouble, and finally acknowledged him as ruler of all the country. And on his death-bed he called his four sons, and to them he portioned out his country thus: To the eldest son he allotted Skardu; to the youngest he gave Astor; and to the two others he gave the kingdoms of Rondu and Kermang. And, having blessed his sons, he died.

Now the youngest son was discontented and sorrowful, and said, "What good is Astor to me and how shall I live there, for it is a desolate country where only Devs and fairies may live." So he went to his foster-father, who had also been the wazir of the dead king, and said to him, "Oniloo Malo! What am I to do? I desire to stay here in Skardu, where the crops are good and fruit is abundant, and I have no wish to take the desolate country of Astor which my father has bestowed upon me." And the Wazir, who loved him as his own son, said, "Listen; do as I tell you and you need not go to Astor." So he listened to the plan of the Wazir, his

foster-father, and when the time of evening prayer was come, he sought out his elder brother at his place of prayer and said to him, "Kako, you neither give me leave to depart to my country, nor do you give me any lands here. From this delay I cannot but think that you yourself desire to go to Astor. Well, be it so; you are the elder brother and have a right to choose. But then it is only just that you should give me Skardu. Do you agree to this?" And his elder brother, who was at his devotions, so that he had no thoughts for the things of this earth, gave no answer, just as the Wazir expected; but pursuing his devotions he bowed himself in obeisance to the Almighty. And seeing this the men whom the Wazir had brought with him, and whom he had previously instructed, said with one accord, "See your elder brother bows his head in acquiescence. He will go to Astor and you are to remain here."

Then the youngest brother, still acting upon the advice of the Wazir, went straight to the hill called Dungus, on which is the old fort, and taking with him the musicians, caused them to play the tune known as "Haripe Bam," which is the coronation air of the Rajahs of Skardu, and is only played when a rajah comes to the throne. And the elder brother, awakening from the reverie of his devotions, heard the sound of music coming from the hill which is called Dungus, and he knew that it was "Haripe Bam" that was being played. So he climbed up the hill, and finding his brother there with the Wazir and his followers, said, "Who has ordered 'Haripe Bam' to be played, which may only be played at the crowning of a Rajah of Skardu?" And his younger brother answered, "Indeed I have ordered the musicians to play, for when I asked you just now you said that you wished to go to Astor and would give me Skardu in its stead." And all the witnesses of the Wazir

said, "It is true!" Then the elder brother, seeing that he was alone, said, "It is Oniloo Malo who has tricked me thus; but be it so, I will go to Astor." So the next day he set out to Astor with a small following, and his younger brother continued to rule in Skardu. And their children's children rule in these places still, and although the Rajah of Skardu is by rule of precedence the senior of them all, yet, on meeting the Rajahs of Skardu, Rondu and Kermang salam first to the Rajah of Astor, for amongst themselves they still recognise the elder branch of the family of Brak-Makpun.

CHAPTER XI

THE STORY OF TRANGPHALIO THE HUNTER

From Astor a double march brings one to Doyan, from the spur above which place the sharp peak of Rakaposhi, away across the Indus Valley towards Hunza and Nagar, comes in view for the first time. Between Astor and Dushkin the road in places drops down almost to the level of the river, and at times the scenery is decidedly pretty, and especially so in July and August, for then the hill-sides here are a mass of tall white and pale pink hollyhocks. But it is not until after leaving Dushkin that the lovely Mishkin Jungle is entered, one of the prettiest pieces of the whole road. But to appreciate this forest at its full value, one should have scrambled down from the Indus Valley from Skardu, where, except round the villages, day after day the country is destitute of trees, flowers, or greenery of any sort. Then indeed this good road, winding through the jungle, with clear bubbling streamlets rushing over or under it, the dainty flowers, the fragrance of the pines, the twittering of little birds, and cool breezes and welcome shade, all seem a very Paradise after the scorching arid wastes of the Indus Valley. But even coming from Astor the place is very pleasing, and no better spot could be found in which to sit down and have a rest. In front, across the river, are Ditzel and Sheltar nullahs, and if it is clear one may see just the top of the two-headed peak which

forms the head of the former nullah, and about which there is a quaint little legend.

At the foot of the topmost precipice which forms part of Ditzel Duphungi—the two-peaked head of Ditzel Nullah in the Astor district—at the highest point to which a man can climb, stands the stone figure of a man. He carries a long gun, and his two hounds are on leash, and his name is Trangphalio. To this day the precipice at the foot of which he stands bears his name, though few have the energy or the necessity to visit the place.

In the old, old days, when Astor and Gilgit was still "Devistan," the country of Devs and Peris, lived Trangphalio, a mighty hunter. One day in the course of his wanderings he met with a mountain fairy, who, pleased with the manly bearing and comely looks of the hunter, appeared to him in the mortal form of a graceful maiden. By such beauty Trangphalio was overcome at once, and it was not long before the chance friendship ripened into a consuming passion. The fairy maid encouraged his suit and allowed him to become her lover; but one strange condition did she impose upon him, that during "Ualo," the hottest season of the year, he should refrain from hunting and leave the markhor and ibex unmolested. And Trangphalio readily promised that, for the sake of her love, would he do as she wished. So the fairy accompanied Trangphalio unseen on all his wanderings, as indeed every shikari is accompanied by his râshi, or familiar spirit, who precedes him wherever he goes, and returns to his village one day before him, so that the "dainyals" or witch-doctors of the village say, "See, to-morrow so-and-so will return from shikar," for the dainyals know the râshis and spirits, and can see them and converse with them. But Trangphalio's fairy-love was more than mere râshi, and she watched over

Scrambling down the Indus Valley.

him and guided his footsteps in his hunting and his mountain forays. Thus success attended his every venture, and his renown as a successful shikari grew, and his name was famous from Rakaposhi to the borders of Kashmir. His stalk never failed, his bullet never missed its mark, and his house was ever well stocked with game. And so he kept his promise and his love and prospered.

But a time came when, one year in the season during which he had promised not to shoot, Trangphalio became restless. The first crops had failed, the Indian corn and tromba had been sown, and Trangphalio sat on the top of his flat-roofed house, looking with longing eyes towards the mountain tops and bemoaning his fate of enforced inactivity. For some days he resisted all temptation to take up his gun, which stood idle in a corner, and go out and shoot something; but each day his resentment against her who had imposed this condition upon him grew stronger. At last, in his anger, he jumped up and stretched his sinewy limbs, saying to himself, "Who is she, a mere girl, that I should be tied hand and foot by her condition! Are not the animals of the hills and the jungles as much mine as hers? I will go out and shoot something, and we will see who shall prevent me!"

So saying, he took his gun, and, crossing the foaming Astor River, made his way to the head of Ditzel Nullah, where he knew at this, the hottest time of the year, he would find ibex. From afar off his sharp eyes discerned a large herd of ibex on the steep slopes below Ditzel Duphungi, and he began to stalk them. With the agility of a mountain goat he leaped from rock to rock, now climbing a precipice where path there seemed none, now running over a steep slope of loose sand and shale, but with footstep so quick and light that the sand had scarce begun to move under his foot when it was off

again; for was he not Trangphalio the hunter, whose prowess and activity were unequalled? And now, as he drew near to his quarry with the stealth of a snow leopard, he made use of all available cover until he reached the rock he had been making for. Thus arrived, Trangphalio saw to the priming of his gun, removed the plug of rolled birch bark from the muzzle, and cautiously raising his head peeped round the rock. There were the ibex—bucks, does, and kids—close in front of him; but another unexpected sight met his gaze, for there, in the midst of the herd, he saw the fairy maiden, the object of his love and the object of his late resentment. She appeared not to see him, and was engrossed in milking a doe ibex into a silver bowl, just as a village woman might draw milk from a village goat into an earthenware pot, whilst the remainder of the herd grazed peacefully all round.

Now, perhaps Trangphalio knew not who the maiden really was, or perhaps, even knowing, he had become so pride-swollen with his success and the renown he had gained that he said within his heart, "Now I will shoot an ibex, and will show her that I am not to be bound by her conditions." So, picking out a young buck, he fired; but, contrary to his expectation, the animal never moved or flinched as his bullet flew, he knew not where. The ibex did not even attempt to run away, and only a couple of red-billed choughs circled over him, uttering shrill caws as if in mockery. Now rage consumed Trangphalio, and all sense left him; all that remained was a burning desire to slay the ibex, so he reloaded and fired again, with the same result. Then the fairy commenced to chaff and to mock him, urging him to fire again and again until all his bullets were spent; but the ibex remained there as if nothing had happened. When, putting his hand into his pouch, he realised that it was

empty, and that he had no more bullets, a great feeling of shame came upon him. When the fairy asked, "Trangphalio, hast thou any more bullets?" he hung his head and answered, "No!" Then said the fairy, in a tone which was not the caressing voice which he knew and loved, but one of imperious command, which brooked not disobedience: "Now, do my bidding! You still have powder; fashion a 'gus'[1] from 'darah'[2] wood, and with it load your gun and fire at the ibex which shall wander away from the herd. For you shall know that the ibex are mine, and only such as I give you shall you slay. This time I pardon your fault, but if you again disobey me your own life shall be forfeit!" With these words she disappeared.

Then Trangphalio, filled with shame and repentance, made a "gus" of "darah" wood from a tree near by and loaded his gun with it. Meanwhile he noticed that one young ibex wandered away, apart from the rest of the herd, who stood where they were, watching him. At this animal he fired, and down it fell to his shot, the rest of the herd galloping away at once.

For a long while in fear and wonder, Trangphalio abstained from shooting in the forbidden season, but as his success continued his sense of fear grew less and his pride increased. At last, he again determined to try and shoot something, saying to himself: "I will see if she is there, and if she is, I will return quietly, and she will not see me. If she is not there I will wait till nightfall to bring home the meat, and she will not know anything about it." So he climbed up again to the

[1] "Gus": Shina name for a long-shaped bullet made from wood or stone, used in the days when lead was scarce.

[2] "Darah": the wood from which these bullets were fashioned; a tree with a red bark, in the Punjab called "Tabalgoh," and much sought after for making sticks and staves.

same place, where he knew the ibex would be, and seeing no one about he shot one. As he ran forward to the foot of the precipice to seize the fallen animal, the fairy appeared before him, and, holding up her hand, said, "Shame on thee, thou base one; thou shalt become a stone image, to mark for ever the place of thy baseness!" And then and there he and his two dogs and all that he had with him became a statue of stone. And there he stands to this day, a silent witness of his own guilt, and sometimes the ibex play around his feet, for they know that Trangphalio, the once mighty hunter, is now harmless, and that their fairy guardian protects them.

CHAPTER XII

MARKHOR

The Astor District has long been famous for its markhor, and gives its name to the wide-spreading, lyrate form of horns such as are generally known to sportsmen as the Astor variety of markhor.

Probably no trophy of Himalayan game is more difficult to secure, and affords better sport in securing it, than the markhor. He is the king of the goat tribe, and his very looks and bearing are regal!

It is in winter, at the commencement of the rutting season, that he is in his prime, for during the summer he has been grazing on the hill-tops on lush grass, and is fat, and strong, and lusty. He has then, too, just acquired his new winter coat, which, if he be an old male, will be long and shaggy, and very dark in colour. At a distance he will appear almost black, and his long beard and mane—I say mane purposely, because it is not only his throat, but his whole neck and shoulders which are covered with long hair—sway to and fro as he walks, and reach below his knees almost to the ground. And last, but not least, his long spiral horns, typical of symmetry and strength, just as his whole body gives the impression of graceful activity and pride, complete the picture of a trophy such as any sportsman might be proud to possess.

Though there are several recognised types of markhor known as the Pir Punjal, Kaji Nag, Astor, Suliman, and so on, these names can really only be accepted as

defining horns of a certain shape, rather than the markhor of a strictly defined locality. Although a certain type of horn may be said to predominate in a certain locality, the types merge into each other a great deal. Many Chitrali markhor horns closely resemble the Pir Punjal type in form, though the majority of Chitrali heads doubtless more nearly resemble the Kabul type. Similarly, in the Gilgit agency a head of almost any type may be shot.

Any good markhor head is a handsome trophy, but the widespread, lyrate type, known as the Astor variety, is perhaps the grandest of all.[1] Even the given types vary considerably in curve and spread; and in estimating the length of a head before shooting it, this must be taken into consideration. Some heads are most deceptive in appearance, so that even experienced shikaris will occasionally make mistakes in estimating their length. There is a decided tendency to over-estimate heads when one first sees them; carried proudly on the living animal's head, the horns do look enormous! Many Kashmiri shikaris are much given to over-estimating heads. Whether this is done with the intent to please the Sahib at the moment by having found a so-called big markhor; or whether they are but poor shikaris, and really cannot judge a head, I don't know; probably something of both. But few Kashmiri shikaris see markhor regularly for unbroken periods, so that when they do take a Sahib after markhor, it may be that they have not seen one for a whole year or more, and have lost the ability of judging accurately. On the other hand, I have found, that in the Gilgit agency, where the local shikaris live, as it were, "cheek by jowl" with the markhor, and are always seeing

[1] A markhor with horns of this type is called by the Shina-speaking natives of the Gilgit and Astor districts, Doru Mayaro.

heads, they are, on the whole, much better at judging heads than Kashmiris; and one or two men I have known who seldom make a mistake.

And now for practice, let us estimate how long the horns of that markhor we have just seen on the spur yonder should be! It is a matter of practice, and to a certain extent, knack. Each man may have his own way of doing it, which suits him best, but let us set about judging this one in the following way: Firstly, we note that each horn has three complete spiral twists, and the points show signs of beginning to turn for the fourth twist; and now that he is facing us, we can see the first big sweep of the horns.

Have a good look at this: run your eye along it, and in your mind calculate if it appears to be three spans length from the base of the horn to the end of the first big spiral. Yes, it certainly appears to be about three spans. Well and good. What facts have we now to go on? The horns have three complete twists, and the first big twist is at least three spans length. Then it is a good markhor, and unless we find anything unusual, we may already bet on the head being about 50 inches; it may be more, but it should not be less. So we have already got a rough estimate, and have ascertained that the head is worth shooting.[1]

But now we would like to try and make out the length of the horns more exactly; so let us see if either of the two horns appears to be obviously longer than the other, if we have not already noticed this point. In this case there is not much difference, but the left horn does seem to be slightly the longer. Very well, now take each twist of that left horn separately, and

[1] According to the Kashmir Game Laws, no markhor of less than 45 inches may be shot. In the case of ibex the size is 35 inches, and should be more.

note whether each twist appears to be an open, wide-sweeping spiral, or a straight spiral, and also the length of each complete twist. A side view of the head will enable us to see this more clearly. The spirals are rather straight in their curves, so that the horns will probably not actually measure as much as their length in the straight would lead us to hope. We look at the horns again as a whole, and they look as though they should be about 54 inches, but remembering their somewhat straight curves, we put the head down as 51 inches to 52 inches. Now, by way of a final test, we fix our attention again on the left horn, and in our mind's eye we gradually work up it, bit by bit, measuring off at a time what we consider to be one span. Four, five, six! no, not six, but decidedly over five and a half spans, which confirms our estimate of 51 inches. Let us then put the head down as 51 inches; if we shoot it, and it turns out to be 52 inches, so much the better!

I don't know whether other sportsmen will find this method of procedure in judging heads satisfactory, but I think I may at least say that the points to which I have drawn attention will have to be taken into consideration in some manner if an approximate estimate is to be arrived at.

At the very mention of his name the markhor commences to be of interest. As most sportsmen know, the name is supposed to be derived from Mar (Persian), a snake; Khordan (Persian), to eat. Now do markhor eat snakes? That is a question I should not care to answer definitely, but, at the same time, I would like to add a few facts which my own experience and inquiries have elicited; so that any one reading these pages may draw his own conclusions. The belief that markhor eat snakes sometimes is certainly current amongst natives, and although many people are inclined to regard the

matter purely as a fable, General Kinloch, a sportsman of vast experience, seems to have believed that the native idea was not entirely groundless, and from certain evidence which I have collected I cannot but think that there may, after all, be some truth in the theory, that markhor do occasionally eat snakes: not certainly as an ordinary article of diet, but perhaps as medicine or for some such reason.

Firstly, let it be stated that there are snakes to be found in many if not all of the localities which form the habitat of the markhor. In the Kaji Nag and Pir Punjal snakes abound, as they do also in the Shamshaberi Range and those nullahs, such as Ashkote and Sailkalla, of the lower Kishenganga valley, in which markhor are found. In the greater part of the Gilgit agency snakes are scarce, though they are plentiful in many of the Chilas nullahs and Dachkat Nullah. So much for the snakes!

Now to consider the markhor. The first thing about him which draws our attention towards snakes is the "Zaharmora" or snake stone, the Bezoar stone[1] of the

[1] It would seem that the Bezoar stone was better known and certainly more in use in England 200 years ago than it is to-day; which may be seen from the following letter dated Friday, July 10, 1696:

"The next in course to amber is Bezoar, of which one thousand nine hundred and sixty ounces were imported from India, anno 1694.

"It is said to be taken out of the cervi-capra or deer-goat. Mr. Dale calls it the Bezoar-Goat, and says, it is an animal of Persia and the East Indies.

"It is a stone of divers shapes, as oval, long, flat, triangular, and what not; it has a straw, stick, stone or something else in its middle; and I presume, its shape is agreeable to the shape of the matter it encloses; the outside is smooth and shining of a greenish colour something like the great olive, it has little scent; it is coepous or laminated like an onion one coat upon another, and seems contiguous, rather than continuous.

"It is of most magnitudes from an ounce and half down-wards. It is scarce and generally dear: I have known it under twenty Shillings, and lately it has been sold for almost five pound the ounce: for this reason several have been counterfeited and made up with powders, rosin and

ancients, which certainly does exist, even if it is not really so efficacious as a charm and medicine as it is reported to be. This stone is found in the stomach of some markhor, and for that matter also in some tame goats and urial, and is something like half a shelled walnut in appearance. I have seen several, one in Kashmir, one belonging to a Nagar man, and two or three in Gor on the right bank of the Indus, where the villagers still shoot a great deal.

That delightful book *Hobson Jobson* gives, amongst others, the following notes on the Bezoar stone :

"1673. The Persians then call this stone Pazahar, being a compound of Pa and Zahar, the first of which is *against* and the other is *Poyson*.—Tryer, 238.

"1826. What is spikinard? What is Mumiai?[1] What is Pahzer? Compared even to a twinkle of a royal eye-lash?—*Hajji Baba*, ed. 1835, p. 148."

All these "Zaharmoras" were much valued by their owners, and said to be efficacious as charms to prevent

mucilage : but these are discovered with a hot needle or rubbing upon chalk first rubbed on paper ; it will not look greenish as the true Bezoar will, but the best way is by minding the coat, the colour, and breaking the stone.

"With this and several other things is made the Gascoignes powder, which is an excellent medicine indeed, and in very great use with our English physicians ; but this may be abused also, although those used to good may know it by the colour, which is greenish also, and may be known not only by looking on, but also by rubbing it wet on a chalked paper.

"There is an occidental Bezoar of divers colours, and bigger, and some such stones are taken out of oxen, but they are reckoned far inferior to the Eastern Bezoar."

. . . . . .

I have adhered to the original wording and punctuation of the letter. Doubtless, in this instance, it was the Persian ibex rather than the markhor to which reference was made.

[1] Mumiai is a form of pitch which exudes from certain kinds of rock. It is greatly valued as a medicine, and there is a Persian proverb regarding it which runs :

"Shikasta usav 'gar na bawad
Che kimat mumiai me rawad."

sickness; and also as a medicine if a man was actually ill, when the "Zaharmora" would be soaked in a little water and the patient made to drink the water. I made inquiries whenever possible concerning these stones, and was always told that only a few markhor had them in their bodies, and more especially "those animals who ate snakes." Again, I have been repeatedly told both in Gilgit and in the Kaji Nag—in the latter place once by an old man who had been a shikari for over forty years and had shot regularly himself before game-laws were introduced—that the best and most powerful "Zaharmora" was very rarely obtained, and even then only by the greatest of luck, as it was formed in the following manner. When a markhor ate a snake he foamed at the mouth: this foam, falling from the mouth on some rock, gradually dried into a stone-like substance, light in weight and not very hard, something like pumice-stone. This was the real and best "Zaharmora," if only any one was lucky enough to find it. I have been told this, not once, but many times, and whatever may be the truth of it, it certainly is a common belief, as I was given identically similar accounts by men in widely separated districts who had never seen or heard of each other, and who spoke a language entirely foreign to each other. So much for the "Zaharmora"!

Another belief which is prevalent, not only in districts where markhor are found, but all over the Punjab and other parts of India, is that a snake will not enter a house in which a bit of the flesh or a skin of a markhor is kept. So here again we have at least a connection between markhor and snakes.

And now we come to the actual eating of snakes by markhor. It is a point which has always interested me, and I have made inquiries from all sorts and conditions of men extending over a considerable number of years.

In almost all cases the only answer I have been enabled to elicit to my inquiry as to whether markhor eat snakes is, "I have heard that they do," or "People say that they do." But I have met with three men who were able to give me more definite information, and who were prepared to swear that markhor did eat snakes, and that they had personal experience to prove it. It may be argued that these three men were simply bigger liars than the rest, and such, of course, may be the case, though I think not entirely so, for various reasons. The first of these reasons is that the men in question had nothing to gain by lying: had there been anything to gain by it I should have been more sceptical. Secondly, of these three men, two may have known each other, as they were both inhabitants of the Gilgit agency, though of different parts, one being a Shiah and the other a Sunni Mahomedan; but the third cannot have had any idea of the existence of the other two. All three men had vast experience of markhor and all kinds of Himalayan game, as had their fathers before them. In two cases the men told me what they had actually seen themselves; and in the third case the man told me what his father had seen, when he himself was a boy. In all three cases the main facts as far as the markhor and the snakes were concerned agreed in detail. The most interesting of the three stories I will attempt to give, as it was related to me, and as I wrote it down in my diary from memory at the time.

"In the old days, long before the Hunza-Nagar campaign, when we people of the country used to shoot anywhere and everywhere for meat, there being no game laws in those days, I had gone after markhor in Sheltar Nullah. I found a markhor—a male it was with horns about five spans long—and proceeded to stalk him. In those days, we only had country-made guns, which we

sometimes loaded with stones or anything we could get, as lead was scarce; and we had to stalk up to within very close range of an animal before we could feel confident of hitting him. On this occasion I managed to get within sixty paces of the markhor, but on peeping over a ridge found that his body was almost entirely hidden from me by the conformation of the ground. I had to creep nearer in order to get a shot, and by wriggling along on my stomach very slowly, keeping a small rock between me and the markhor, I managed to reach the rock which was about thirty paces from the markhor. I really had no hope that I should get there without being seen, for the cover was very scanty. As I peeped over the rock I thought the markhor would certainly see me and run away, but he did not; and I then saw that something had happened to him, and concluded that he was ill. Under ordinary conditions he must have seen me, but as it was he seemed quite unaware of my presence. He was swaying his head from side to side, and foaming at the mouth, and appeared to be stupid, like a man who has taken too much opium or charras. I shot him as he lay there, and dashed forward to seize him; on reaching him I found that he was eating a snake, the head end of which was in his mouth chewed to pulp. His mouth was full of foam, and there was foam on his beard and on the ground round him. This foam was of a bluish colour."

That is the story as related to me by the old man himself.

Of the other two instances, I will only say that one man simply stated that his father, who was a great shikari in the old days, came in from shikar one day and said he had seen a markhor eating a snake. The other man told me how he had once shot a markhor under very similar circumstances to the story related

above. He also said that the markhor appeared to be slowly chewing the snake, that the animal was foaming at the mouth, and that the foam was of a bluish colour. He collected a "Zaharmora" from this foam when dried in the sun, but though he kept it carefully for some years, it was very brittle and broke and powdered away.

Now even if we refuse to believe these stories unsupported by the evidence of our own eyes, there still remains the superstition, the native belief, that from the markhor which has eaten a snake is to be obtained a potent antidote for snake poison in the form of solidified saliva. And even granting this to be "a legend strange and vague," still this fiction gives us something to think about. Of late years we have heard much of cures for snake bites, of the permanganate of potash cure and others, of which the most important is the antivenin of modern medical science. Now is the belief, that the solidified secretion from the mouth of a markhor which has eaten a snake forms an antidote, altogether contrary to these discoveries of modern science with regard to antivenin? Indeed it is curious to think that a superstition of the inhabitants of one of the most uncivilised portions of the globe, which has probably existed for hundreds of years, may be, in a crude and natural form, the same as those facts which are now expounded by our leading scientists after many years of study and experiment.

Nowadays specifics against snake poison are, I believe, obtained by administering sub-lethal doses of snake poison to certain animals in gradually increasing quantities, until the animal so treated has developed in its blood substances antagonistic to the venom to such an extent that it is unaffected by doses of poison sufficiently large to kill several human beings.

The serum of the animal thus treated can then be used as an antidote in case of snake bite.

Now in the case of the markhor, the production of the "Zaharmora" or "snake stone," according to native stories regarding it, does not differ so very greatly from the manner of manufacture of antivenin; at all events the crude idea is the same. The markhor, having eaten a poisonous snake, becomes intoxicated and falls into a state of semi-consciousness from the dose of poison, which for it is sub-lethal. During this period of semi-consciousness there is an increased secretion of saliva which is itself derived from the blood, which presumably contains a large quantity of substances antagonistic to the poison of the snake. The saliva, therefore, may also contain these substances, and the "Zaharmora," which is this secretion, dried, may with some reason be supposed to be capable of exercising such functions as are accredited to it by native belief. However, whether the teachings of modern medical science tend to support, or otherwise, the above explanation of the production and functions of the "Zaharmora," may we not regard this belief as at least foreshadowing those discoveries of modern science which are now revolutionising the treatment of so many diseases? All the above remarks are, however, but mere surmises, and the writer advances them in no spirit of argument, lest he draw upon himself the criticism of those into whose scientific province his wandering thoughts have strayed.

Markhor and ibex being both of the goat family, and often living in the same hills, might well be expected to frequent the same ground. On the whole this is not the case, although in late May I have seen a herd of markhor graze through a herd of ibex and pass on without apparently taking any notice of them. The

chief difference in their habits is, that as a tribe, ibex will never leave snow if they can help it, whereas markhor as a whole certainly prefer to keep out of it. Again, ibex remain throughout the year in mixed herds, comprising animals of both sexes;[1] whereas markhor of the two sexes remain aloof from each other except for about six weeks in winter during the rutting season.

Ibex are more numerous, and certainly, as far as my experience goes, congregate in larger herds than markhor. I have frequently seen herds of ibex comprising sixty animals, and once or twice even a larger number; whereas the largest herd of markhor I have ever seen, all grazing together as one herd, was forty-four; and after a day or two these split up into two herds.

There is a favourite piece of ground for ibex on the left bank of the Shingo River below Kharbu on the Baltistan road; and frequently a large herd of ibex may be seen across the river from the road. I once watched a herd there from the road for nearly an hour, and counted over fifty animals, but there was not a head among them of over 36 inches.

Ibex remain more or less at the same level all the year round; all the winter they sit up in the snow. In about the beginning of May they descend somewhat, to graze on the slopes of young grass laid bare by the melting snow; as the snow line creeps higher and higher the ibex move with it. In winter during the rutting season, markhor come very low down, and may even be seen drinking from the Indus itself, or in the case of the Kaji Nag and Shamshaberi, from the Ginger Pani stream which flows between the two ranges and joins the Kishenganga at Teetwal. It is

[1] Except for quite a short period, when the young are born.

at this period when the markhor are collected in great numbers in a restricted area that the snow leopard gets his best chance.

After the rut, the males, excepting some immature animals, generally known in Kashmir as "rinda," separate from the does, and gradually work higher and higher up the hillside as the snow recedes, until in June they reach the forest belt, where they are hard to find.

Later, however, the sportsman who is prepared to climb may get another good chance at a big markhor in open country; for just as the markhor retires into the forest for the sake of shade and coolness, so later in July and August he is driven out of the forest by the gad-flies, called by natives "dansa." At this time he goes to seek refuge on the open hill-tops, where the wind blows cool, and where gad-flies are not; just as in the Terai sambhur move up to the higher ground of the Nepal hills in the hot weather to avoid heat and mosquitoes; and the cheetal, though they do not move up higher, may be found during the day resting in some glade where the forest is not so dense as to prevent a current of wind keeping the mosquitoes off them. In about September or beginning of October, it of course varies in different years, the markhor are driven down into the jungles again by the first snowfall, and gradually move lower and lower, until in the end of November they may be found on the lower edge of the jungle, or even on the bare hill-side of rock and shale below the forest line. Later still in December and January they will be at their lowest.

The actual rut may be said to commence on December 21st, though the fighting and herding together of their harems by the big bucks may commence before this date. This applies to the whole of the Gilgit

agency, though some say it is a few days earlier down towards Chilas. In the Pir Punjal, Kaji Nag, and Shamshaberi it is, I should say, nearly a month earlier. The saying of the shikaris and Gujars of those parts is, that "When the seed-pods of the kehnti—a broom-like bush with a pink flower—begin to burst and shed their seeds, and when 'Krikiti'—the Pleiades—rises as the sun sets, then the big markhor will commence to think of rutting."

The position of an old markhor as lord and master of his harem is no sinecure; for besides other big animals, whom he must first conquer in order to establish his undoubted authority, there are generally two or three young bucks whose chief delight in life seems to be to "rag" the old gentleman whom they dare not actually fight. Perhaps he is busily engaged paying his court to the wife that for the moment attracts him, rubbing his outstretched neck along her flank with all the glands inflated, as from time to time he gives voice to "sweet nothings" in the form of deep-toned snorting grunts, whilst the doe playfully prods him in the ribs with her little horns, as much as to say, "Go on wid yer!" So taken up is he with his amours, that for the moment he fails to notice that his grazing harem is becoming more and more scattered, and that a young markhor with a head of some forty inches is approaching one of his errant wives and trying to separate her from the rest of the herd, a manœuvre which causes a loose rock to go hurtling down the hill almost on top of the amorous old greybeard below. Instantly he looks up. Ponk! sounds a snort of rage, very much like the voice of a small cracked motor-horn; and the old buck rushes after the intruder, who, being altogether of lighter build, easily evades him, and leaps from rock to rock uttering snorts of

derision. Having chased away but failed to catch the smaller animal, the enraged king of the herd ignores him entirely, pretending that he is beneath contempt; but cannot resist venting some of his ill-humour on his ladies, whom he chivies round and drives together again. And this sort of thing may go on throughout the day.

The markhor of the Pir Punjal and Kaji Nag are often spoken of as "forest-loving animals" when compared with those of Astor and Gilgit, who are described as trusting more to bare rocky precipices for safety. The writer is inclined to think that the Astor and Gilgit markhor would be just as forest-loving as their cousins of Kashmir had they the forests to love.

It must be remembered that all the lower portions of most of the nullahs in the Gilgit agency are destitute of forest; and even the upper portions of many of them have no jungles to compare with those of Kashmir. But all the same, at certain seasons of the year the markhor of Dardistan make very good use of such patches of jungle as they can find, and keep to it pretty closely. In the Pir Panjal and Kaji Nag there are vast forests running right down into the valleys, so that, even in winter, a markhor wishing to cross over from above Doonga Bela, say, in the Kaji Nag, into the Shamshaberi, could do so almost without having to traverse a single bit of open ground.

There is no doubt that there is a very great element of luck in shikar; and given an average shikari, and a Sahib who is of average activity and skill in shooting, there are three things that go to make success—hard work, patience, and luck. For years I had been trying for a big markhor, and though I had been patient, had worked hard, and had come across several good heads, I had never succeeded in getting one. And then one

day, when perhaps I did not altogether deserve it, my luck changed and I got two! There may be other sportsmen who also have unfulfilled hopes in the matter of markhor, and they may like to fortify their flagging hopes by hearing how the luck of another changed at last.

Now, before telling my tale, lest some young and fearfully energetic sportsman should say, "No wonder he didn't get a markhor if he was as lazy as that," let me say in self-defence that for several days previous to that on which I was finally successful, I had been working really hard. From sunrise to sunset I had climbed and shivered in vile ground and villainous weather, had forded streams, fallen over slippery rocks, and flopped into snow-drifts, until my feet seemed like pulp and my body a mass of bruises. And all this in vain, for not a sign of the big markhor had I seen; and it was only my implicit faith in Amir Khan as a shikari that kept me going.

On the day in question, Amir Khan started off up the nullah at the first flush of dawn, leaving me to follow with a coolie as soon as I had got some warm breakfast inside me; having first taken great care to see me out of bed and dressed before he withdrew his own inspiring influence! Noor Khan (the coolie) and I were somewhat delayed by finding a fox caught in one of my traps, which we had to dispose of, but about an hour after the shikari's departure we got started. I was very stiff and footsore from the strenuous days I had already been through, so that, in spite of the evil smell of the water, I was not sorry to soak my cold, sore feet in those hot sulphur springs which give this nullah its name, and which we passed on our way up. Besides, I knew that above this spring I should have the pleasure of wading through undiluted snow

water, so I thought I might just as well warm my feet thoroughly whilst I could. We did not find Amir Khan where I first thought that we might, but found a mark made with a khud stick on the ground, to let us know that he had gone on up the nullah, and that we were to follow.

Some way farther up we found him, and he greeted us with the news that he had seen some markhor, but that the big one was not with them. He proposed that we should go on up the bed of the nullah, and then climb up the hillside above the left bank of the stream to view the ground opposite. I confess I was far from hopeful and not in the best of tempers, which must be my excuse for answering that he and Noor Khan might climb up to the clouds if they wished, but that, personally, I didn't intend to climb another yard until there was something to climb for! I must say Amir Khan took it very well, and he and Noor Khan went off up the nullah, leaving me to rest where I was.

In an hour or so I began to feel cold, and being wet up to the knees, rather regretted that I had not gone with them. Time dragged on, and it was, I suppose, about one o'clock, when I began to think, "Well, if they don't come back soon we shan't get into camp again for the fourth night running until after dark!" Having eaten some lunch and smoked a pipe, I was trying to warm my feet by jumping up and down on a rock, when I saw Noor Khan running back to me alone. His speed, and the fact that he was alone, refilled me with the hope that had been gradually slipping from me day by day and hour by hour. Yes! they had seen the markhor a long way off, but in a good place for a stalk.

Off we went, renewed hope lending me new energy.

For a mile or so we kept on up the nullah, and then started climbing up the cliffs on the right bank of the stream—a very stiff climb, and I fancy it must have been about two hours altogether before we reached Amir Khan. Having hurried, I was perspiring freely, and was pretty cooked, so was glad to sit down and eat a few mouthfuls of snow whilst Amir Khan told me the news.

He vouchsafed the information that the markhor had moved since first they had seen them, and could not resist adding, "If you had been with us from the start we should have had a shot by now," in answer to which remark, which I felt had some truth in it, I contented myself with the question, "Well, where are they now?"

When I had recovered my breath and had wiped the perspiration from my eyes, I took the glasses. The markhor were about 800 yards off, most of them hidden from view; but four animals showing in a little cliff on which they seemed to be eating salt. The big one did not show.

We decided to push on to the next spur, so as to be nearer to the markhor, should they give us a chance of a stalk, but had considerable difficulty in getting there, as we could not get cover from two of the markhor, though we climbed a good way up our ridge to try and get a bit of rising ground between them and us. In the end, however, we managed it successfully by waiting until these two animals had their heads down grazing and were turned away from us; then we crept over the ridge and down into the next little nullah, where we were soon out of sight. We had some rather nasty ground to get over, the rocks having a thin layer of melting snow on them, and the wet state of the "paris" —which in this nullah are at the best of times rotten

and treacherous—making them more uncertain than ever.

On reaching the top of the next ridge we found that we were within 450 to 500 yards of the markhor, who had now all come up on to a small sloping plateau above the salt cliffs to graze.

Amir Khan did not take long to set the telescope on the big fellow, saying, "Now, Sahib, look at the markhor which I told you all along was here somewhere." I looked: certainly he appeared a magnificent animal, with two horns like pine trees growing out of his head, but remembering that I had overestimated the horns of the last markhor I shot, I was cautious. Very carefully I regarded his horns from every point of view, noting the twists, the spread, and going carefully up them in imaginary spans through the big glass, which showed them up splendidly.

I was almost surprised to find whatever test I applied, I made out the horns to be about 54 inches; but still being cautious, I said to Amir Khan, "At any rate, he is at least 52 inches." Amir Khan agreed that "He ought to be that," and that was as far as I could get him to commit himself at the time, though he told me afterwards that he put them at 53 inches, but was afraid, as I was of saying more on account of the straightness of the horns, which made them look enormous.

I now relinquished the glass and he set it on another animal, a dark-coloured beast, which he had noticed before. After another good look at it he told me that he thought it was at least 48 inches, and asked me if I would shoot it, if I got the chance. I decided to have a jolly good look at it for myself before answering, though I knew I could pretty well depend on Amir Khan as a judge of a head. The glasses convinced me

that his estimate was quite correct, and I said I would shoot the animal, if he gave me a chance after trying for the big one.

It was now getting late, and the herd was in a position which made a move on our part impossible; and Amir Khan was getting despondent. The chance was gone he said — a dig at me for having been lazy in the morning! And so it certainly seemed, for the markhor appeared quite content to stay where they were. If only they would move towards us, or even over their spur into a little nullah beyond, we might do something. But no, they continued to graze where they were in the most annoyingly contented and complacent manner—just as if they knew they were trying our tempers sorely, and delighted in doing it. The light of the sinking sun was creeping farther and farther up the hill-side, and nearer and nearer to the snow crests, and I was just beginning to give up all hopes, when Amir Khan said, "Some of them have moved towards the crest of the spur, and one is actually on top of it; perhaps after all they are going on into the next nullah." Yes, even as I picked up the field-glasses—I had been resting my eyes—the leading animal disappeared over the ridge. The rest, however, continued to graze, and their movements were most leisurely: it was just like watching the movement of the minute hand of a watch. In about a quarter of an hour, I suppose, though to us it seemed ages, they were all over the rise and hidden from us, except one wretched light-coloured beast with one horn about 45 inches, and the other broken off at about 20 inches. There he stood fighting a most skilful rear-guard action for his main body, and move he would not. At last he went too.

After waiting a second or two to see that he did not pop back over the ridge to take another look, as animals

often do, we rose with a sigh of thankfulness, and leaving the coolie where we were, made our way as quickly as possible towards the markhor, fearing that if we did not hurry they might be up the other side of the nullah and out of range before we reached the ridge they had just left. Down we went into the nullah, but were soon brought up by a sheer drop of about 30 feet at the bottom. Amir Khan eventually found a way down it—a way of sorts, that is; but taking his assurance that a small projecting rock covered with slushy snow was the easiest thing in the world to step upon, for what it was worth—or a good deal more than it was worth, I think really—I scrambled down somehow. A run across a slope of loose shale took us across the nullah, and we were lucky to find that it was easy going up the other side. Amir Khan signed to me to come slowly and save my wind, whilst he went on and crawled up behind a convenient rock on the ridge to spy out the land.

One of Amir Khan's many good points is, that he is always as cool as a cucumber and never gets flustered. This occasion was no exception to the rule, and thanks to it a good deal, I was quite calm too. There is no doubt that excitement, or the reverse, is very catching, and many a good stalk is spoilt by a shikari getting excited at the end of it and so flustering his Sahib.

When I reached the rock behind which Amir Khan was crouching, he nodded to me to assure me that it was all right; and as I too peeped over, whispered, "The big one is the one with his head turned that way." They were in the nullah at about the same level as ourselves, and about 180 yards from us. I could not see those big horns which I so longed to possess, and could not quite make out which was the big one from Amir Khan's brief description; but there was one

animal whose horns I could not see, owing to his position and the failing light, which I took to be the big one. I was just going to ask another question in order to make sure, when this animal lifted his head and moved forward. Then I knew! There was no mistaking those grand horns now; and I settled myself to shoot. He only moved forward a few paces and then very kindly stood still, broadside on to me. As he came to a standstill I let him have it.

He did not come down to the shot, but dashed forward a few paces and then stood again; and it did not need Amir Khan's whispered "Shahbash!" to tell me he was well hit in the body. As he stood, I gave him another bullet, and he came down with a crash.

The rest of the herd had dashed about with snorts of alarm at the first shot, but uncertain whence the danger lay, not having actually seen us, they soon stood still to look round; at the second shot, however, they started making off in real earnest. Feeling pretty sure of the big fellow, I looked about for the dark-coloured one, but neither Amir Khan nor I could make him out. Several markhor were making off diagonally up the far side of the little nullah, but he was not among them. Then three markhor dashed out from behind some rocks after the others, and in the last of them we both recognised our black friend simultaneously. He was going a great pace, a magnificent sight as he bounded along, but as he drew near the others who were now disappearing over the spur, he slackened speed, and I fired. The bullet struck him high up in the foreleg and he nearly came down, but recovered himself and disappeared after the rest.

"Shahbash!" said Amir Khan again, and told me quietly to watch a dip in the ground beyond where

they had disappeared, in which he said they must show again, and sure enough a markhor very soon showed just where he said he would.

"That's not the one," said Amir Khan, who was now using the glasses, and again, "No, no, no," as each beast appeared, till at last, "regardless of grammar, he cried out, That's him!" "Him" was going strong in spite of only having three legs, but on top of the rise he stopped and looked down after the others. With the 300 yard sight I fired, and down he came all of a heap.

I thought he was stone dead, but Noor Khan, the coolie, who had now joined us was sent off to "halâl" him. When he got about half-way there, my "stone dead" markhor jumped up and disappeared before I could do anything!

Now we turned our attention to the big markhor. He was lying down, but stood up when we approached near to him, so that I had to put another bullet into him to finish him off—this in spite of the fact that the base of his heart was found to be shattered by the first bullet, when we cut him up! Amir Khan dashed in and caught him by the horns as he commenced rolling down the shale slope; but soon lost his feet and went slipping and sliding down, hanging on to those precious horns like grim death. There was a good way to go, but still fifty to sixty yards would have taken them both to the edge of the precipice overhanging the main nullah, so I put down the rifle, and managing to get hold of the beast's hind legs, we stopped him between us, though not without difficulty; and Noor Khan, who came flying back on hearing this shot, built up a wall of stones below the markhor to prevent him rolling any farther when we let go.

As soon as we had our hands free, Amir Khan

commenced spanning the horns. Four, five, six! "Six spans!" he cried; "and my span is 9 inches, so it must be 54 inches!" And so indeed it was, and more; for when I had got the tape out it proved to be no less than 55 inches.

By the time we had taken the head and skin off it was quite dusk, and already a star showed faintly here and there. Amir Khan was for spending the night on the hill-side and making our dinner off the markhor; but having no food left and no coat or blanket, and the strongest of objections to markhor's flesh, I determined to get back to camp somehow. "All right," said Amir Khan, "I'll get you back to camp, though we shall not get there till nearly midnight," and then could not resist having one more word on the subject of laziness, adding, "But had you been with us at first we should have got the markhor by two o'clock!" This time, however, his eye twinkled as he said it, and his look was no longer reproachful; so that feeling I had atoned for my fault by straight shooting, I determined to refute Amir Khan's statement by an excuse which all natives are themselves so fond of using, "No," I replied, "that markhor was not fated to die until evening: at two o'clock its time had not come," to which he answered readily enough, "Quite true, Sahib, quite true; for who can kill man or beast until the span of his life is fulfilled unto the last minute," which was the last mention of the matter that either of us ever made; and in the joy of success the fault on my part (which I quite admit) was passed over and forgotten.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MOUNTAIN SHEEP

On arrival at Ram Ghat, where the Astor River joins the Indus, one may say that one has reached the heart of the urial country, for although in summer these sheep may be found as high up as Shankargarh in the Kamre Valley, in spring, autumn, and winter they are only to be seen in those hills which immediately flank the valleys of the Indus, the Gilgit, and the Kanjut River.

The distribution and nomenclature of this animal is interesting. Mr. Rowland Ward, in his *Records of Big Game* (sixth edition), says of *Ovis Vignei:* "Distribution. From Ladakh and Zanskar to Russian Turkestan, Afghanistan, Beluchistan, Southern Persia, the N.W. Frontier of India, the Punjab Salt Range, and Sind. Four local races, two of which probably intergrade in the Indus Valley, are recognised: the typical urin of Astor, the sha or shapo of Ladakh, *Ovis Vignei Typica*, with much black in the ruff," &c.

As regards local names, *Ovis Vignei Typica* is known in the Gilgit agency as urin (the "u" pronounced as double "o"); this, however, is a generic term, a full-grown ram always being called "un." In the Indus Valley these names begin to be used in the Haramosh district (also sometimes in Doru), above which the Baltis use the name shapo, which, however, they pronounce "shapho." Between Skardu and Haramosh there are, as far as I am aware, no shapo, but they commence again about fifteen miles above Bunji, and extend in great numbers down

the Indus Valley to Chilas and Tor, below which again I am told they do exist, but in very small numbers. In the Gilgit direction they are to be found in large numbers as far up as Gilgit itself, and for about a dozen miles beyond towards Yasin, where another gap occurs in their distribution, until Chitral territory is reached. From Gilgit they extend also up the Kanjut stream to Hunza and Nagar, and even into Gujal, where it is curious to find them replaced in one valley, the Shingshal,[1] by *Ovis Nahura*, the Bharal.

As far as I have been able to see, there is no difference between the shapo of Baltistan and the urin of the Gilgit agency. But whether he be called urial, urin, or shapo, he is a very good animal to shoot; and though in the Gilgit agency one might shoot one of sorts almost any day, big heads are few and far between, considering how very plentiful these animals are throughout the agency.

It was late autumn, but scarcely any snow had fallen yet even on the high hills. To the south, Nanga Parbat sparkled in the sun with its 16,000 feet of perpetual snow and ice. To the north, Deobani and Rakaposhi showed their ever white heads above the lower intervening hills, and the mighty barrier of Haramosh Peak appeared as a wall of ice blocking the Indus Valley.[2] But for the white caps and mantles of these giant mountains, little snow was to be seen. The markhor would be hard to find, high up as they were as yet in the highest jungles, whence they would not descend to the bare crags and precipices below until a fall of snow brought them down. The ibex would sit up in the snow as no animal but an ibex could, content with such scanty fare as they could pick up from tufts of grass growing in the

[1] Shingshal: this valley is usually called Shingshal in Hunza and Gujal. In Gilgit and elsewhere Shimshal.

[2] Nanga Parbat 26,000, Rakaposhi 25,000, Deobani 21,000, Haramosh 24,000, all visible from Bunji.

crevices of some precipice where the snow does not lie, or browsing off leaves of the birch trees, and quite secure in their snowy fastnesses. And so I sent Amir Khan out to search for urial, knowing that they, at any rate, would be fairly low down and "get-at-able"; for it is only in the hottest months of the year, when the Indus Valley becomes like a furnace, that the urial ascend to any great altitude.

One evening a few days later, Amir Khan's coolie came in to report that two good "un," as the Shina-speaking folk call the shapo or urial rams, had been found. They were on the lower slopes of the hills which run down from Haramosh and divide the Indus from the Gilgit River valley. The urial being on the left bank of the Gilgit River, necessitated my crossing the Indus by the "Jhula" or rope-bridge near Sanjok Lhassa,[1] some miles above Bunji, a mode of crossing to which I had the strongest objections. These Jhulas consist of three ropes of plaited birch twigs, one below to walk on and two above as hand-rails. This particular bridge I knew to be in a very bad state of repair, but there was no hope for it, and the next morning saw me crossing this evil contrivance with much swaying, bobbing, and clutching on my part. The few Balti coolies I had with me to carry my baggage crossed the bridge carrying their loads without the slightest concern. They were men from Rondu higher up the Indus Valley, where the river is spanned by a similar abomination, so they were used to it.

These Baltis come into the Gilgit agency in great numbers during the cold weather, and obtain work as coolies, and earn good wages. They are for the most

[1] Sanjok Lhassa in the Balti tongue means "place of white stones." There are a quantity of white rocks about there from which they make a kind of cement or mortar.

part poor, hard-working folk, and finding it difficult to live in their own much over-populated land during the winter, many of them go all the way down to India to work as coolies. One of the boys with me on this occasion told me he had been down as far as Umballa, and had also been to Simla and Mussourie. I think this annual cold weather immigration of hillmen to India goes to prove the general prosperity of the peasant folks of India as a class, whatever seditionists and Labour M.P.'s may say to the contrary. There seems always to be a demand for labour, and very large numbers, not only of Baltis, but also of Ghilzais and Pathans, find employment throughout the cold weather. Now in a district which is famine-stricken—that is to say, where the local inhabitants are for the time being really hard pressed—they flock to the Famine Relief Works in thousands for a far smaller wage than they would earn working as coolies for the Public Works Department, or even for contractors in the ordinary way. But—in the Punjab at least—there seems to be no local competition for coolies' wages, and contractors are very glad to obtain foreign labour, which I think all goes to show that the peasant of the Punjab is, as a class, prosperous, and has no need of earning his living otherwise than by tilling his own fields in due season.

But "to return to our moutons"—in this case real, live, wild moutons.

It was dusk by the time we had reached the spot where Amir Khan was to meet us. He was there, just returned from watching the urial, and took us down to a stretch of sand at the edge of the Gilgit River, where he had decided to camp for the night. Near us, on the same sand spit, were encamped some Balti gold-washers.

During the winter, when the rivers are low, parties of Baltis and Yaghistanis may be seen collecting gold all

the way down the Indus and Gilgit River valleys. As far as I can ascertain from inquiries on the spot, each man collects on an average one and a half to two tolas of gold in the season, which he sells at the rate of Rs. 16., Rs. 18., and Rs. 20 a tola. Much of the gold is bought by Hindu shopkeepers in Chilas bazaar, who give the gold-washers grain in exchange for the gold; they in turn sell the gold to the goldsmiths of Muzafarabad and Abbotabad, usually at a good profit.

Amir Khan said he had seen a fair number of urial, but that there were only two rams which he considered worth shooting. One of these animals appeared to have been wounded at some time or other, for he was very lame in one forefoot. He was in a herd of five. The other, which was the larger of the two, was with two other fair-sized rams. Both these heads he had seen that evening above and on the other side of a flat-topped hill which ran out into the valley from the main range, as a headland into the sea, a little way above our camp.

Now, it is the custom of urial, as indeed of most Himalayan game, to come down to graze and water in the evening. In early winter urial, as a rule, drink twice a day, becoming very thirsty from eating the dried-up grass and scrub on the hill-sides. Later, when the snow is very low down, they eat snow, and thus are not obliged to descend to the river so often for water. In spring too, when all the grass is green and succulent, most animals seem to be able to go for some days without drinking. As soon as it is dark they cease grazing and wandering about, and lie down in some open spot where they feel that they will have due warning of an attack by leopards or wolves.

As soon as the first flush of dawn brightens the eastern sky they commence grazing again, and gradually work their way uphill, feeding as they go, until they

reach some precipice or point of vantage where they can lie up in security for the day. The only animals I know which seem to feed steadily and move about throughout the night are bears and musk-deer. Accordingly, we settled that our best plan would be to start at earliest dawn and climb up our side of the afore-mentioned headland, with the night breeze blowing down the valley in our faces from the direction on which the urial had last been seen. Thus we hoped to reach this commanding ground before the urial, and to be able to see them coming up from below, and make our further plans for a stalk as occasion demanded.

We had not left camp more than 300 yards behind us when I saw the form of an urial silhouetted against the now brightening sky, looking down at us from a rock above us. She was no great distance from us—250 yards perhaps—and seemed more interested in us than alarmed. She probably thought we were ordinary, harmless country travellers, as we were then on a track leading to a village farther up the valley.

But still she seemed to think that if human beings were already on the move she had better be moving too, so with a warning snort, that half-sneeze, half-whistle peculiar to urial, she disappeared over the sky-line in a single bound, followed by another ewe, whom I had not detected among the rocks below her. A little farther on we turned uphill towards the point which we wished to gain. A herd of about a dozen urial, in which there was one ram with a head of about 26 inches, was met with half-way up; and I was afraid that they would go on ahead of us to the top of the hill and disturb our particular quarry, which we hoped was on the far side. But, fortunately, they turned off to the right and went up another nullah.

On reaching the top of the hill we crawled to the

crest of each little wave-like undulation to see that there were no animals already arrived there. In this way, by the time it was broad daylight, we reached a ridge of rocks whence the ground fell away slightly and then stretched in a narrow, sandy, rock-strewn plateau for about 1000 yards, until it finally merged into the main range of hills flanking that side of the valley. A glance showed us that there were no animals on this plateau. A further search with the glasses revealed three animals on the slopes of the main range, already about on a level with ourselves. They were somewhat scattered, and were quietly grazing. When the light improved the telescope was brought into use in place of the less powerful Zeiss field-glasses, and Amir Khan had soon made out that one of the rams was the one he called the big one. Searching the hill-side I made out some ewes and one or two small rams in various places, but neither I nor the shikari could see any signs of the other head we were after, the lame one.

Now, if the three rams lay down for the day where they then were, well and good. A stalk was by no means impossible, though it would entail a long climb round. If, on the other hand, they worked along the face of the hill and then settled down somewhere on the far end of the plateau, we should be as it were "bottled" for the day, because we could then neither move forwards nor backwards from the cover behind which we lay without being seen. Even as it was, we now noticed that the urial kept gazing intently in our direction, and we began to fear that they must have seen us, great as the distance was. But soon they began to move along towards the plateau, at first grazing as they went, and then descended into the nullah formed by the edge of the plateau and the main hills. It was not long before they appeared again on our side of the nullah, on the edge of

which they stood for some time looking in our direction. It was almost too much to hope that they would come along towards our hiding-place, but still they might, as they are very restless at this time of year, and often wander about grazing, fighting, and playing throughout the day.

For a long while they kept us in suspense by moving about on the edge of the nullah without coming any farther in our direction, grazing a little, playing and fighting amongst themselves in a friendly sort of way. We had a splendid view of all their movements through the glasses, as the distance cannot have been more than nine hundred or a thousand yards. One ram would go up to another and strike at his flanks or quarters with his forefoot, just as a striking horse strikes at any one approaching him. At first the other would treat this insult with the greatest contempt, and would stand there motionless with his nose in the air, without even deigning to look round. Then his assailant would strike at him once or twice again, and perhaps give him a push behind with his horns. This was too much for his dignity, and he would bound forward a few yards to get clear and then wheel round; then with a jump he would run forward and charge his tormentor, who would meet him with lowered head.[1]

Through the telescope we could see the heads meet and both animals jump back as if rebounding from each other, and then after an interval of perhaps two seconds the sound of the meeting horns—crack! like the report of a pistol, would reach one, by which time probably

[1] Urial, when fighting, run at each other and charge with lowered heads. They may start off with a jump to gain impetus, but they never stand up on their hind legs and butt at each other as markhor and ibex do. This is, I think, a distinctive difference between the wild sheep and goat tribes. It is a very pretty sight to see two big markhor balance themselves on their hind quarters, and then crash down simultaneously on each other.

A Himalayan View.

both animals had started to nibble some grass as if nothing had happened, for this was not a fight in deadly earnest but merely exuberance of spirits. Presently, to our joy, they started to move towards us! It was just as well they did, for Amir Khan's language generally, and the invectives that he cast at those urial in Shina, Hindustani, and even Persian, was becoming as sultry as I was becoming cold from waiting in a piercing cold wind! When they had come to within 500 or 600 yards of us, to my utter amazement I saw a fourth ram going to meet them! He seemed suddenly to have fallen from the skies! He must have passed along the cliff below us but quite close to us on our left, and then up and on to the little plain. It must have been this animal, I think, that the other three rams were looking at when we feared they had detected us.

The party of three advanced to meet the newcomer—the big fellow leading, the two smaller rams some yards behind. I noticed the big ram had well-curved horns, whereas the fresh arrival had very straight, wide-spreading horns, which at first made him look a bigger head than he really was. I don't think he was more than 27 inches, though he was undoubtedly a bit bigger than either of the other two rams. The big one and the stranger met, they even passed each other at a distance of a few yards; they only just passed each other and then began to circle round, just as two dogs meeting sometimes do, wondering whether they shall fight or be friends. They both tried to look very dignified, and appeared to be walking on tiptoe. The other two rams stood quite still and watched the meeting with interest. After circling round each other for a while, the big ram went up to Straight horn, seemed to jostle him a little with his shoulder, and then struck at him two or three times with his forefoot, which doubtless is, in urial language, the

same as asking, "Oh, come ye in peace here, or come ye in war!" Mr. Straight horn, who was a good deal smaller than his antagonist, decided to take it all in good part; and apparently gave some such necessary answer as young Lochinvar did; for the old ram left him alone and passed on.

Now having satisfied the leader of the herd, it still remained for him to introduce himself to the other two rams and find his position with regard to them. He had adopted a diplomatic policy with the big ram and had acknowledged his superiority, but he was not going to "kowtow" to these other two!

So a series of trials of strength took place with each other in turn, friendly and playful on the whole, but I fancy there was a spice of malice in it at times. I noticed that one of the rams was particularly persistent in hustling and teasing the stranger, whose patience at last gave out, which fact was clearly shown by the viciousness and force of his next charge, which was more like real business. In fact, this rather unexpected exhibition of strength and energy drove the other animal back some distance, and nearly knocked him off his feet. This was apparently sufficient to establish the newcomer in the herd, for henceforth he was not interfered with, and they all decided "to be and let be." Moreover, to my great joy, they all started to move along together towards our hiding-place.

When they had come within 400 yards or so I crouched down behind the rocks holding the rifle ready, but allowing Amir Khan to do all the watching. They came on for some distance, and then Amir Khan whispered to me that they had again stopped. I peeped round my rock and saw them standing there about 300 yards distant, and there they stayed for a long while, whilst Amir Khan's

whispered imprecations became gradually more and more insulting to the urial.

The abuse a native of India is capable of is wonderful, no matter whether he come from north or south, east or west! Only one word perhaps—but oh the subtlety of it! for if you only understand it and think the matter out, that single word or phrase blasts the lineage of the abused completely up and down from generation to generation. And all this time as I crouched there the wind seemed to blow colder and colder, for the sun was covered by clouds, and I shivered more and more until I feared that if an elephant or the proverbial haystack marched past me I should not be able to hit him.

At last after an interval which seemed ages, and may really have been as much as a quarter of an hour, the shikari whispered, "They are coming on again," and a little later, "Now, Sahib, is the chance to shoot; the big one is on the right." I raised my head slowly and saw them standing in a bunch only about 120 yards in front of us. I raised my rifle to aim at the big one, but as I did so one of the smaller animals moved in front of him and covered him. Now the big one has moved! Now is the chance!—but no! he is exactly facing me, and I would rather have him broadside on. Ah! now! and the big urial is sprawling on the ground, and his three mates are racing away over the plain!

I think death must have been instantaneous, for the bullet struck him just in the right spot, and he never stirred an inch from the place he was standing in, falling like a log where he stood. But Amir Khan was ready with the knife, and did not take long to "halal"[1] the animal in true Mohammedan fashion. The muscular

[1] Halal: to cut the throat whilst the animal is alive, and thus make the meat lawful for Mussulmans.

movements of the beast as he lay on the ground were quite enough evidence of life for Amir Khan, and the throat was cut and Bismillah was said, and the meat became lawful for any good Mussulman—at any rate the whole of my camp fed off it that night and no one asked any questions. The head proved to be a very pretty one, nicely curved and not broken at the tips as so many urial horns are. It measured $30\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Now this all sounds as if urial shooting is the easiest thing in the world! You just go out, climb to the top of a hill and the animals walk up to be shot! Don't you believe it. Indeed you certainly wouldn't believe it if you had been with me on one or two other occasions when I was trying to get the best of an urial ram. Urial shooting as a whole may be a good deal easier than markhor shooting—which I think is the most difficult form of shikar I know—but there is no doubt that there is besides skill a very great element of luck in shikar, and luck varies. Many is the time that I have been badly worsted by an urial.

On one occasion I had been watching a single ram for two days without being able to get near him, as he was always surrounded by one or more herds of ewes and small rams, who would insist on staying between him and us, whilst a strong wind prevented our stalking him from the other direction. At last on the third morning we found that he had, for some reason best known to himself, climbed up to the very top of a high hill. As soon as he disappeared over the crest of this hill we started to climb after him, hoping to catch him asleep on the other, the sunny side of the hill. It took us a good three hours to climb that hill, and when we got to the top and I saw him lying down all alone, I thought that at last I had got him. But no, not a bit of it! I was counting my chickens before they were hatched, for

suddenly, just as I was thinking we were getting to the end of a very pretty stalk, the wind changed, and he was off! I tried to console myself with the thought that he would probably be an inch bigger next year, but I remember it seemed a very long and weary way down that hill and back to camp!

Urial are not very timid animals. From living low down throughout the winter, and from frequently seeing goatherds, they became somewhat accustomed to the sight of man. All the same they are no fools, and seem to have very clear intuitions when a man is approaching them with evil intent.

Their powers of scent are not very keen, but their eyesight seems to be excellent. The chief trial in urial shooting is that they are so restless. They settle down, and you think you have got them. To avail yourself of cover, or to avoid some treacherous current of air, you make a long detour and a long climb; when you reach the place where you had last seen the urial they are not there! You look about and find them high up above you. Again you climb and make your stalk, and as likely as not you will find they have moved down to their old quarters again! In this way I must confess the urial is a most heart-breaking beast to deal with.

CHAPTER XIV

OVER THE INDUS

HAVING in imagination dragged the indulgent reader over the Kamre Pass and through Astor, the writer feels that the long-suffering one may have got used to the process, and even perhaps like to be dragged still farther to Gilgit and Hunza and Nagar, which is almost the most interesting part of the Gilgit agency. If the reader's patience is at an end, well—he need come no farther! The excellent road which zigzags down the gorge of the Astor River to Ram Ghat, where it joins the Indus, is still sufficiently dry and desolate to give us an idea of what the horrors of the Hattu Pir must have been in the old days of forced labour when Balti and Kashmiri coolies died by the score, converting the place into a perfect Golgotha. These days are past; but even as late as the spring of 1912 a sportsman, looking for urial on the Hattu Pir, found the skeleton of a man who had evidently crept under a rock to die, and thus escaped having his remains scattered to the four winds by foxes, crows, and vultures.

Between Ram Ghat and Bunji we look back to a fine view of our old friend Nanga Parbat, but there is little of interest between the oasis of Bunji and Gilgit itself, except perhaps the suspension-bridge over the Indus, about eight miles above Bunji, and a spot known as Bhup Singh's Pari. Here the road runs along the top of some cliffs which overlook the winding Gilgit stream, and along the edge of the cliffs may be seen the

remains of stone breastworks, built by the mountaineers when they hemmed in and overwhelmed the Kashmir general, Bhup Singh, and his invading army. That year was a disastrous one for the Kashmir arms, for not only was Bhup Singh's army destroyed, but another force, the garrison of a fort, the remains of which may be seen near the mouth of the Kirgah nullah, was also put to the sword. An account of the disaster at Bhup Singh's Pari, as the writer had it from the grandson of a man who was there at the time, may, even if somewhat biased and lacking in historical correctness, be of interest.

Bhup Singh brought from Astor with him twelve men as guides, and crossing the Indus at Bunji, made his way up the Sai valley, and eventually encamped with his army on the hills which divide it from the Gilgit River valley. From this point the general wished to descend to the Gilgit River, and called the guides to consult them. They were strongly opposed to such a measure, and had, it seems, almost persuaded the general to allow them to lead the army over the hills as far as Minawur, a village some eight miles short of Gilgit, whence they might descend and advance over a more open plain without running the risk of being hemmed in.

At this juncture a Dogra colonel put in an appearance, and on being told that the guides wished to keep to the hills "pooh-poohed" the idea, saying, "Why should they fear Yasini and Gilgiti dogs; let them bar the way if they dare!" So the general gave the order to descend into the Gilgit valley next day, an order which sealed the fate of his army. The head guide, who was a lumberdar of Astor, was so uneasy at this step that he asked the general to give him in writing a statement saying that he and his fellow-guides had been averse to the move, and were not responsible for any-

thing that might occur; and Bhup Singh, who seems to have been a just man, whatever he may have been as a general, gave him a letter to this effect.

The next night, as the guides had foretold, the Kashmir army was hemmed in down in the river-bed, and after fighting against hunger and their enemies for several days, were forced to surrender. The terms were, that they should lay down all their arms and ascend the cliffs by a given path, after which they would be allowed to return unmolested to Bunji. It was when this surrender had been almost carried out that a sipahi, smarting under the taunts of his captors, drew a dagger which he had secreted in his clothes and stabbed one of his enemies—a hasty act, which was the signal for a general massacre, in which Bhup Singh and his unarmed soldiers were slaughtered like sheep. When the news of the disaster reached Kashmir the Maharajah was furious, and perhaps not unnaturally thought that the local guides had led the army into a death-trap. By his order they were summoned to Kashmir to be punished for their treachery, but Bhup Singh's statement which the Astori lumberdar had been wise enough to obtain, saved their lives. Such at any rate is a local version of the affair, which is probably as authentic as any.

The first view of Gilgit itself is very pleasing, especially in spring or autumn. In the first season one may halt upon the rising ground near the village of Jutial, whence Gilgit first comes into view, and gaze over the broad, well-cultivated valley, a wealth of young greenery and pink blossom. In the autumn the scene is equally beautiful in its garb of red and gold. On the far bank of the river, near its junction with the Kanjut stream, are the nullah and village of Dainyor, inseparable in the minds of Gilgitis from the name of one of their favourite

heroes, Azuré Shamsher. In front of us, beyond Gilgit itself, is the famous Kirgah nullah on the right bank of the river, and opposite to it are Baldas and the Hareli plateau, both places famous for urial, and of importance in the folklore of Gilgit. Let us leave Azuré Shamsher and the Kirgah nullah for the present, but before going on to Hunza and Nagar, consider Baldas, which is connected with one to whom those states may almost be said to owe their origin. This is Trakhan Ra of Gilgit; and as his life was an eventful one from his very birth, we may as well start from that point with the story of—

How Trakhan came into His Own

Very many generations ago there was a young Ra of Gilgit who married a woman of good family from Darel. With her he lived for some time quite happily, and a daughter was born to them. The Ra and his young queen Soni were beloved of their people, for the queen was kind and fair, and the Ra himself excelled in all manly sports and exercises such as appealed to a hardy race, and at polo he surpassed all his subjects in brilliancy of play. Such was his passion for the game that once in each month, when the passes were open, he was wont to take a team of polo players over to Darel to play against his wife's seven brothers. In these polo matches sometimes the Ra and his Gilgitis won, and sometimes the Darelis, for they too were expert players; and owing to the evenness of the two teams the zest and rivalry reached the highest pitch. Upon each occasion there was some prize given by the losing side to the winners, at first a small matter of sheep and goats, then rich clothes or horses; and as the rivalry increased so did the betting, until finally, having gambled away horses, jewels, land, and slaves, the two teams staked their own lives

upon the game, the losers to forfeit their lives to the winners.

Never was there such polo! All mounted upon the best ponies that Badakshan could produce, and all fired with a determination to win, each side played as mortals have never played before or since. Level was the scoring all through, and goal by goal the score mounted up towards the fatal nine goals which would decide the fate of the players. Five all, six all, seven all; and then the Darelis scored again, making it eight-seven in their favour. So tense was the excitement that even the bands ceased playing, and the spectators refrained from cheering and whistling, a thing unheard of in the annals of polo in the Hindu Kush. Only the players shouted from time to time, mingling their cries with the thundering of hoofs and the sharp crack of the hard mulberry wood ball as the sticks of the players struck it. Every effort the Darelis made to score the last life-giving goal before their opponents could equalise was frustrated by the stern defence of the Gilgiti men, but such play could not last long. Up and down, backwards and forwards, they rush and swerve, until at last, near the Darelis' goal, the Ra of Gilgit himself striking the ball against the rough stone wall, caused it to jump up off the corner of a stone, caught it in his hand, and was away through the goal before anyone could stop him.[1]

Eight all! The Darelis gaze in amazement; the few Gilgiti followers break the silence by cheering and whistling, and their band thumps and blows with

[1] In Gilgiti polo any player may catch the ball in the air and score by riding through his opponents' goal with it. The other side, however, may pull him off his horse or stop him in any way they can. One often sees a regular "scrum" as at football, each player wrestling for the ball and holding on firmly to the bridle of an opponent's horse to prevent him getting away with the ball. The feat of catching the ball in air is called "Babla" in Shina.

frenzied excitement. Eight all, and the young Ra himself is to take "toiki,"[1] and who so likely as he to score?

Taking the ball in his left hand and dropping his reins, he puts his horse to a gallop. His own band plays madly, and his followers utter piercing whistles as he comes careering down the ground. His little "koi," a round cap of the softest ibex wool, has fallen off; his long dark hair streams in the wind, and his manly face flushed with excitement, yet calm with determination and confidence in his own skill, inspires confidence also in his followers. Now as he draws near the centre of the ground, he leans well over, swinging his stick at full arm's length as he rushes along with his own side backing him up and the others riding with them neck and neck, but all clear of the Ra, who by the rules of the game must have one perfectly free shot at the ball in the air. When in the centre of the ground opposite the band he flings up the ball, and before it falls to the ground makes his unerring stroke. Away speeds the ball high in air, but straight, deadly straight for the Darelis' goal; so that it needs but a tap to send it through. Now the whole field is plying whip and heel, but the Ra, besides having a bit of a start, is mounted on a horse famed throughout the Hindu Kush for its speed and endurance, so that he even draws farther and farther away from the rushing mob behind him, and is well ahead of them when he hits the ball through the goal. But it does not count as a goal yet, not until

[1] When one side scores a goal, the game is recommenced by a player on the scoring side galloping down the ground as far as half-way with the ball in his hand. Arrived at half-way, he throws the ball in the air and strikes it before it touches the ground. This is an absolutely free shot, and no one may interfere with him. A good player will seldom miss the ball, and will sometimes score a goal straight away from "toiki," as this is called. In this manner the two teams automatically change ends after each goal.

one of the Gilgit team can pick the ball up from the ground, a somewhat dangerous undertaking with the other side hitting at it to try and hit it back into play again. So once more the Ra strikes the ball forward where the polo ground slopes up into a narrow lane, and there, before the others are upon him, without troubling to dismount, bends down and picks the ball up from the ground.

Now it is a goal; that fatal ninth winning goal!

Something such as this, legend tells us, was the game of polo which the Gilgitis played for their lives; and it is distressing to think that the winners exacted the full penalty of defeat from the losers, and cut off the heads of the queen's seven brothers who had played so valiantly for their lives. But it is a rough country, and the times were rough too; besides which there may have been "reasons of state" for doing so of which we know nothing. Anyhow, the Darelis seemed to think it quite fair, for they allowed the Gilgitis to depart without molesting them. Fleet-footed messengers were sent in advance and soon carried the news to Gilgit, so that when the victors returned the people of Gilgit were expecting them, and surrounding the Ra's fort sang to them that song of victory which they now no longer sing; for in these peaceful days there are no parties to return from successful raids or hunting expeditions.

THE RETURN OF THE RAIDERS

Like ibex on Chaumuri[1] they come,
Returning at fall of night;
Come tune up the pipe and the drum,
To welcome them home from the fight!

[1] Chaumuri: a high peak behind Gor.

Gor and Chaumuri in winter.

They advance with a pride and a grace,
That rivals the "boom" and the "kil";[1]
Who secure in their fastnesses pace
The uplands of Hazal Naril.[2]

At night they swept down from the pass,
By day they hid safe in the glen,
Crouching 'mongst bushes and grass,
Watching the enemies' men.

Next night down the nullah they crept,
Avoiding the false "darum but"[3]—
Whilst the enemy unawares slept—
And surrounded each fortress and hut.

Like an avalanche forward they sped;
All resistance before them they swept:
Of their foemen how many lie dead?
Tobah! How their women folk wept!

As keen as the eagle's the eye,
As sure as the ibex' the foot,
The spoil of the vanquished to spy,
To plunder and gather the loot.

The maids of the foemen are slaves;
Their ghi[4] and their cattle are won;
Their young men sleep sound in their graves,
To *our* young men let honour be done!

Like ibex on Chaumuri they come,
Returning at fall of night;
Come tune up the pipe and the drum,
To welcome them home from the fight.

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[1] Boom Mayaro: Markhor; and Kil Mayaro: ibex in the Shina dialect.

[2] Hazal Naril: a famous grazing ground on Nanga Parbat into which the animals are supposed to disappear in summer.

[3] Darum (or darung) but: literally "drum stone." In narrow pathways and approaches one large rock was placed upon two or more others, so that anyone stepping on it caused it to sway and make a noise, thus giving warning of their approach.

[4] Ghī: clarified butter. It is buried and stored for many years and is one of the chief forms of wealth of the people of the Indus valley. It is greatly appreciated by them when it is about forty years old and—to our ideas—absolutely putrid.

Thus honouring the victors with music, song, and dancing, all Gilgit rejoiced throughout the night, and only Soni the queen was sad. Not only sad was she, but in her heart burned a fire of anger and of longing for revenge; and the love that she bore her husband, the Ra, became deadly hatred: for Soni had loved her seven brothers. Now this one thought of revenge consumed her heart, and she was not long in finding a means to the end she sought. Some poisonous herbs mixed with the "sag" [1] which the Ra ate for his evening meal—and her husband, Trakhan's father, lay dead!

Thus Trakhan, who was not born until a month or so after the death of the Ra, lost his father; and but for the kind intervention of the Fates, would have lost his life in infancy, for the queen, his mother, hated him too, because he reminded her of the slayer of her seven brothers. With this mad hatred in her heart, the queen took her babe and, placing him in a box, set him adrift on the river. The box with the helpless infant inside it went sailing away, borne onwards by the rushing stream; but Sirikun, who guards and guides those who are pure and upright, watched over the babe, guiding the frail craft through rapids and past rocky corners, on into the mighty Indus, past the Bunji Plain, through the deep gorges of the Chilas valley, and eventually set him lightly ashore on a sandy shelving bank near Hodar, below Chilas. Here two poor villagers, coming down to the river at dawn to collect driftwood, found the box and in it the child, whom in surprise and wonder they carried home to their own poor hut.

Poor as they were, the wife of the younger man took pity on the boy and cared for him, and brought him up with her own son, and from the day of his finding,

[1] "Sāg": green vegetables.

Trakhan, as they named him, brought good fortune to the family. From that time forward their meagre flock of goats increased, and year by year they were able to set by a larger stock of ghī. In this manner, in ever-increasing prosperity, fifteen or sixteen years passed, and Trakhan grew into a strong and manly youth, comely and good to look upon; and his foster-mother told him the story of his discovery and how that he had come floating down the river in a box. Hearing this, Trakhan became filled with a desire to travel up the Indus to see the country whence he had come so mysteriously. So at last he persuaded his foster-parents to allow him to set off to visit Gilgit accompanied by their own son.

As soon as summer had come the two lads started off up the Hodar nullah; up and up to the very head, where it meets the Shingai Gah; then down over the steep snow slope, past a little half-frozen lake surrounded by a confused mass of tumbled rocks from the weather-beaten crags above, and on, ever downwards, to the grass slopes and jungles of birch and juniper round Chileli, the first spot where they might obtain sufficient firewood to cook an evening meal. Thence skirting the Muzheno Bush, that high ridge which divided them from Kanberi, far famed for markhor, they pressed on till the Shingai Gah merged into the great Kirgah nullah. From this point the white shining peak of Doomani, which the Sahibs for some reason best known to themselves call Rakaposhi, seemed to draw them on with the fascination of its beauty towards the new land that held so much in store for them. They seem to have been a little doubtful as to what kind of a reception they would receive in Gilgit, for passing unnoticed the stone figure of Yathini, who smiled down upon them with sphinx-like smile at the mouth of the Kirgah

nullah, they swam the Gilgit River below Basin and climbed up on to the Hareli plateau on the far bank. Finding a spring of water on that portion of the plateau which is called Baldas, and also that they could from thence look down undisturbed on the smiling Gilgit valley below, they decided to camp there at first.

In Gilgit, Soni the queen still ruled, but she was weak and ailing; and the people wished for a strong man to rule over them, but knew not whence to choose a ruler. Now on the morning after Trakhan and his foster-brother reached Baldas, a curious thing occurred, for all the cocks in Gilgit began crowing with more than their usual vigour, and, to the surprise of all who heard them, crowed out distinctly the words, "Baldasar Thum bei!"—"A king may be found in Baldas!" This unusual occurrence soon set all tongues a-wagging, and the people sent one deputation to the queen to inform her of the strange event, and another to Baldas to search for the man who might be their ruler. When these men returned they told the queen and the head-men who were collected together, that in Baldas there were two comely youths, who stated that they had come from below Chilas by way of the hills and wished to settle upon the Baldas plateau; one of them saying: "Here will I have my house, and here my cattle pens, and there below the spring my patch of cultivation"; whilst the other spoke in a more lordly manner, saying: "Here shall be my fort, and here stables for my horses, and there will I make a polo ground which will rival the Shawaran[1] of Gilgit itself." Then the queen hearing this, said, "Go fetch them here, and doubtless he of the lofty thoughts, who speaks of forts and horses and polo is the one who is fitted to be your ruler!"

That evening the two lads were brought before the

[1] Shawaran: Shīna, a polo ground.

queen, who was at once struck by the likeness of Trakhan to the husband she had murdered so long ago. So she asked him his name, and whence he came, and who might be his parents; to all of which Trakhan answered boldly, telling how he had been found and rescued from the Indus by his foster-parents. Then Soni, whose heart was heavy with remorse and the sadness of long and lonely years, felt sure that Trakhan was indeed her own son, and, rejoicing greatly, told him the real story of his birth and parentage, and pronounced him to be the true Ra of Gilgit. So amidst much rejoicing the people of Gilgit seated him upon "Nilo But," the coronation stone of the Ras of Gilgit; and thus Trakhan came into his own, and lived to be one of the most famous Ras that have ever ruled in that country.

Under his wise rule and strong guidance Gilgit became once more the undoubted mistress of the Hindu Kush, subduing all the other tribes from Rondu up the Indus valley, to Yasin and the Shandur Pass, and even beyond Hunza and Nagar to the confines of Cathay. His nephews, Girkis and Mughlot, his sister's two sons, he established as the first rulers of Hunza and of Nagar, and from them the present Mirs are descended. His memory is perpetuated by many a story of his doughty deeds, and the people still sing of him.

THE SONG OF TRAKHAN

Oh sunlike Trakhan of Sargin![1] great is the good you have done:
To Hunza and Nagar your sister, to rule in each place, gave a son:
Girkis and Mughlot, your nephews, for the help that you gave bless your name.
Long be their lives and right happy: Trakhan, may your life be the same!

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[1] Sargin: old name for Gilgit.

CHAPTER XV

A GILGIT JALSA

In days gone by Gilgit was an important place, and the eyes of all India, nay even the attentions of two great European Powers, were fixed upon it, for it was in this portion of the Hindu Kush that the British Lion was then in the act of slamming the door in the face of the Russian Bear. But now the Bear has given up trying to push the door ajar, for the present at any rate; the numerous states which form the Gilgit Agency are at peace with the Sirkar and each other, and Gilgit has fallen from its pinnacle of fame. But on this spring morning, although all is peace and Gilgit is a political backwater, to the few Sahibs serving in the Agency, and certainly to the local inhabitants, Gilgit is the hub of the universe once more; for the whole place is *en fête* for the annual "Jalsa" or "Gathering of the Clans." Even the country itself has joined in the general festivity, having put on its most beautiful dress of delicate pink and green. The green is the carpet of young barley spread over all the well-irrigated fields and the tender leaves of the budding willows which line the paths and "kuls," as the irrigation channels are called; also perhaps, in sheltered spots, a few walnut trees showing an early crop of those tender young leaves which smell so aromatic when crushed between the hands. All this green is the background provided by nature with her unerring taste for a wealth of pink almond, apricot, and slightly darker peach blossom.

Such is our foreground; and the distance is no less lovely, for it is one of sparkling white peaks and snow slopes and glorious blue sky. In the old Agency garden, narcissi, daffodils, and violets speak softly of home, and recall the beauties of an English spring garden to the few English men and women of which this "station" consists.

During the morning military sports for the Kashmir troops have been taking place, varied by a game of polo for the local people: a tournament game between two rival states. This game, now just at an end, has been as full of dash and go as usual; and reckless play and most accurate hitting on the part of individual players has gone far towards making up for the absolute lack of combination shown by both teams. "Every man for himself and devil take the hindmost" has been the general order of the game, and as a spectacular show it has been most exciting. There has been the usual collision which occurs at least once at every Jalsa. One player has the ball in front of him and is going full tilt after it, with an excellent chance of scoring a goal; an opponent, seeing no other means of stopping him, adopts a somewhat drastic but successful measure, namely, that of pulling his pony straight across his galloping adversary. There is a crash; ponies and men turn a series of complete somersaults and everyone thinks they must be killed. The game is stopped for a moment, but the ponies dispel all fears on their behalf by jumping up at once; and shortly after them the riders give a sure sign that they are both all right—they are swearing at each other lustily! "It's all right, they are abusing each other," say the crowd and settle down with amused relief. A minute or two later both men are in the saddle, and the game is in full swing again to continue perhaps for another hour or so, for they will play

on without stopping until one team has scored nine goals!

To-day as the crowd streams from the ground at the end of the game, if we have not been entirely deafened by the din of the massed bands who, seated along the stone wall which runs round the polo ground, have played vigorously throughout the game, we may hear spoken in many tongues the praises of a feat performed by one of the Nagar team. Now it is in the Shina dialect of Astor or Chilas, differing considerably from each other and from the Shina of Gilgit itself; now it is the clack of Hunza or Nagar tongues speaking Baroshushki, or the softer Persian of a dweller in Ishkoman. Or it may be Balti or even Pushtu, or the Chitrali of some men from up Yasin way. But all speak in admiration of Jaffak of Nagar, who accomplished "Babla," or the feat of scoring a goal by catching the ball in the air and riding through his opponents' goal with it. But this is not all, for "Babla" is of not infrequent occurrence; but on this occasion the hero of the hour, being hotly pursued by the other team, and knowing that at any moment one of them might seize his pony's bridle and lead him wide of the goal-posts, had himself bent low over his galloping pony's neck, removed the bridle and cast it away. Such has been the morning's game, and now no one doubts that the six hard-hitting Nagar men will once more win the tournament as they have done every year for years past.

But it is time to be thinking of the afternoon's programme, which consists of local games and sports down at Sonikote, the grassy "maidan" which still bears the name of Soni queen of Gilgit, who built a house there. The road is winding and narrow, and will be crowded with people going to the sports. Let us ride down early so that we may avoid the crush and quietly watch

this interesting crowd as it arrives. Seated in the pavilion which was once a little club-house when Gilgit boasted of a larger garrison, and Sonikote served as parade ground, polo ground, racecourse, and everything else combined, we may in comfort see all that is to be seen as the spectators and competitors throng on to the "maidan."

First come some smart little Gurkhas of the Kashmir Infantry and a party of long-limbed Punjabi Mahomedans belonging to the Mountain Battery. Close upon their heels follow several mounted officers, headed by the General commanding the Kashmir troops, a courtly old Dogra gentleman with over forty years' service, but active and upright though he has seen generations come and go during his many tours of duty in Gilgit. We have no time to talk to him now, or he might tell us of the hardships, the victories, and the reverses of the Kashmir armies in these regions, before a handful of Sahibs came to organise and see that the troops got their rations and *occasionally* some of the pay that was due to them; or of Gardiner Sahib who had served Ranjit Singh and Gulab Singh, or of some event at the court of the Lion of the Punjab, where his own grandfather had held a post of honour and confidence. But at present we must content ourselves with returning his salute and cheery greeting, for there is so much to be seen to-day. For some time there is a stream of people of no particular importance, from amongst whom, however, we may pick out stalwart men of Hunza with fair faces and cheery looks, and the darker men of Nagar with their dark, almost black, "chogas," besides Gilgitis and Yasinis, Astoris, Chilasis, and Gujars, and a sprinkling of poor hard-working Baltis with their skullcaps and elf locks.

Now the men of rank and fashion are beginning to

arrive: the Mir of Hunza, accompanied by his Wazir, a fine old man with a long black beard and a love of horses and sense of humour worthy of an Irishman. Other chieftains and men of rank quickly follow: the Mehtarjao of Yasin, in whom we may at once recognise the Chitrali strain by his round almost childlike eyes. He looks the picture of jovial kindheartedness, bubbling over with boyish good spirits, and so he is—at times! For the rest, let us remember that he is a Chitrali, and then we shall not be surprised if on some future occasion we hear of him involved in some cruel intrigue, or see his now smiling face glowering with anger and hatred of some rival. But to-day he is riding and talking with the Governor of Punial, though "they that know" say there is but little love between them. The latter is a general favourite, and like Sir Robert of Birchington:

> "He is tall and upright,
> About six feet in height,
> His complexion, I reckon, you'd calculate light."

Indeed his jolly face is almost rubicund, whilst his eldest son, who rides behind him, might be a Saxon child with his fair hair and skin and blue eyes.

Now there is a considerable stir as a large cavalcade comes into view, headed by the Political Agent, with whom ride the Mir of Nagar and a lately acknowledged Rajah from down the Indus Valley. Flying from British territory some seventeen years ago to Yaghistan, this man carved out for himself his little kingdom, and is now once more in Gilgit acknowledged as Rajah by the Sirkar. His appearance does not impress one at all as being remarkable, and yet he has sampled to the full the dangers and excitements of life. Now a fugitive, almost begging his bread from house to house, now the object of murderous attacks, he has so far come through

all unscathed, and rules as a chief whose fame has reached even Skardu as being invulnerable to the bullets and assaults of his enemies. Close behind them rides the little eight-year-old son of the Mir of Nagar, at whose stirrup walks a servant carrying his bow, his little polo stick, and tent-pegging spear; for this small lad is a keen sportsman, and is ready to enter for all the events. With him rides a wizened old gentleman with a scraggy grey beard who looks like a Chinese mandarin. He wears a bright blue velvet coat and is in his element to-day, for he feels that no discussion or dispute will arise but that it will be referred to him; and even if it be not referred, we may be quite sure he will be on the spot to have his say in the matter. A frail old gentleman now this Baba Shah Mirza, who has certainly reached that period of life which has been called "anecdotage," though he will still turn out and play a mild game of polo, and his kindly old face lights up with the animation of youth when he relates one of his many anecdotes of the days that are gone. Yes, Shah Mirza, you are a loyal servant of the Sirkar if ever there was one, and many a piece of good work have you done in times of war or political crisis.

Then follows a long procession of horsemen, mostly "Gushpurs," as the sons and other young relatives of the various chiefs are called, mounted for the most part on Badakshani ponies, whose saddles and silver trappings come from the same country. Not far behind this cavalcade come the Rajahs of Astor and of Gilgit, the latter a kindly little man, whom it is almost pitiful to see so entirely overshadowed in his own state by the all-powerful Waziri Wazarat, or Kashmiri Governor of the Province. But to-day he looks quite cheerful and happy, since Gilgit is all bustle and tamasha, recalling to him perhaps the days when his state was in all respects the

chief of all around. Just as we are thinking of moving across to the Shamiana, under which everyone of note is now seated to watch the first event, yet another little party of horsemen come into sight. The old gentleman in front, though of no great importance politically, is a character we must not miss. No matter what his real name may be, we will call him "Ginger," by which name he is generally known to the Sahibs in Gilgit, for he has a long red beard and a great predilection for ginger-wine. Let us join him and walk over to the Shamiana [1] with him, talking to him in such Persian as we may be able to muster up, and no matter how halting it may be he will appreciate it vastly, for it is the only language we have in common; and the poor old gentleman must at times feel lonely and left out in the cold when he sees the other Chiefs conversing with the Sahibs freely in Hindustani, a tongue of which he knows nothing, for he is himself a native of Afghan Wakhan.

And what manner of man is it who now comes forward to join us? It is a tall figure somewhat bent with old age, and looking even more portly than it really is on account of the Central Asian coat of quilted flowered silk that enfolds it. In spite of age and obesity, the face with its long beak-like nose and deep-set eyes shows dignity and signs of what in youth must have been fine looks. The old gentleman is undoubtedly in his dotage and is often, I fear, the cause of merriment and laughter on the part of others, but good blood tells, and even when he does the wrong thing he will contrive somehow to do it in the right way; so that when at the official dinner to-night he pops crystallised fruits, sweets, and such-like delicacies

[1] Shamiana: large tent.

into a big red silk handkerchief to take home to his lady wife—as he most assuredly will do—there will be nothing stealthy or furtive about it, and it will be done in such a way that, though the act may amuse, it will not offend. So let us forgive the old man such shortcomings as he may display, and remember that he was once the best-looking, the finest horseman, and the most noted shikari of all the surrounding chiefs; and let us in a moment of leisure try to persuade him to tell us of some of the deeds of his youth, of the game of "buz bazi"[1] at which he excelled, of his favourite hawks and hounds, and above all of Hazar Pasandi, the unrivalled mare which he owned and loved, and the mention of which almost calls tears to the old man's eyes, though to speak of her to a sympathetic listener will be a joy to him until the day of his death.

Now the competitors are assembling for the first event, which is to be the local game called "Tambuk." The tall stem of a poplar tree denuded of its leaves and branches has been fixed upright in the ground, and at its top have been fastened two or three gourds filled with dry powdery sand. The competitors, who are of all ranks and classes, are all mounted and waiting for their turn. Some carry double-barrelled guns of English make, some more antiquated European muzzle-loaders, and others country matchlocks, some of which are of the long "gaspipe" order, and others short, bell-mouthed blunderbusses. As soon as the signal to commence has been given, the leading "Gushpurs" come past in turns, the object of the game being to shoot at and hit the gourds when passing at full gallop. A few of those who have double-barrelled weapons fire one

[1] Buz bazi: a game played in Wakhan, Badakshan, and on the Pamirs. It means "the goat game."

barrel at the mark before drawing level with the pole, but the majority wait until they are just passing it and then turn in the saddle and fire as the mark recedes behind them. Only one man so far, a Gushpur of Punial on a white Badakshani mare, has hit the mark and caused the dust to fly from the gourds, but there is plenty of amusement for all that. At the first shot some one's spaniel, more keen than well-trained, has dashed off to retrieve the bird which he feels sure must have fallen, and is now searching frantically in the long grass on the far side of the maidan, all his master's efforts to recall him being quite in vain. Then one competitor's gun has failed to go off at all, whilst another's pony has "gone off" in a different sense and is now a mere speck in the distance towards Jutial. A well-known member of the Gilgit polo team with a truly wonderful blunderbuss is now galloping towards the mark, now he is almost up to it, and takes a quick look at his piece to see if the priming is all right before turning in his saddle to fire. He has fired: there is a thunder-like roar as his gun belches a cloud of smoke and sparks, such as might make the errupting Vesuvius blush with envy, and the onlookers cheer with pleasure and surprise when they see that the handful of pebbles, tin tacks, chopped wire, or whatever the gun has been stuffed with, has hit the gourds! And so the game goes on, each man going past three times, until one who has been more skilful or more fortunate than the rest is proclaimed the winner.

Other events such as the polo race, tent-pegging, and lemon-cutting follow, for all of which there are numerous entries. The last-named trial of skill is won by a Puniali Gushpur of some notoriety, and the sword that he wins it with is one which was taken from an Indian officer who was killed in the fighting round Chilas.

Polo at Gilgit.

Waiting their turn at Tentpegging.

The present owner of the weapon is a fine-looking man; not tall, but broad-shouldered and powerful, with a row of fine white teeth and black curling mustachios of the swashbuckler type, which, combined with his reputation as a ladies' man, remind one forcibly of

> "François Xavier Auguste, such a gay Mousquetaire,
> The Pride of the Camp, the delight of the Fair."

Indeed this "Black Mousquetaire" of the Hindu Kush has more than once been led into trouble by his somewhat indiscriminate admiration of the fair sex. Some few years ago he fell in love with a Puniali lady, who was unfortunately some one else's wife. However, such a minor detail as this was nothing to our Mousquetaire, and he easily persuaded the lady to run away with him to Yaghistan, even though they had to cross the passes in the depth of winter. There, for some time, he served as commander-in-chief of the cut-throat forces of a ruler who maintained himself by the weight of his sword in the Lower Indus Valley; but now, being either tired of battle, murder, and sudden death across the border, or being homesick, or for some other good reason known only to himself, he has resigned his commander-in-chiefship and returned to Punial with his runaway bride and another whom he has acquired in the meantime, and who is also, so rumour says, stolen fruit.

The next event is archery of a kind that is not often seen, and even here it will probably die out before many generations are passed.

A small mound of earth is heaped up on the ground, and in the side of it is placed a small white paper disc, heart-shaped and about six inches high by half that number broad. As for Tambuk, the competitors are all

mounted, and each holds his bow and arrow ready. Like Pandarus of Trojan fame—

> "Who instantly drew forth a bow most admirably made
> Of the antler of a jumping goat bred in a steep upland,
> Which archer like (as long before he took his hidden stand,
> The evicke skipping from a rock) into the breast he smote,
> And headlong fell'd him from his cliff"[1]—

these archers carry bows cunningly made from the horns of markhor and ibex. Before starting to gallop past the mark, the mounted archer places an arrow upon the bow-string, holding it in position with his left hand; then putting his horse to a gallop, he guides it with his right hand so as to pass the mound of earth, leaving it a convenient distance on his near side. When he is within thirty yards or so of the mound and sees his horse is going as he desires, he drops the reins, seizes the arrow and string with his right hand, and drawing it lets it fly at the mark as he passes. In this event we see our little friend the son of the Mir of Nagar again, and he gallops his pony and speeds his shaft with the best of them. Most of the arrows stick in the earth fairly close to the mark, but few actually strike the disc. Ali Madad of Nagar, as fine a figure of a man as one could wish to see, is to the fore in this, as he is indeed in every game, and, hitting the white disc twice in his three shots, is easily the winner.

All that remains now are the pony races, one for large and one for smaller ponies. The people of this country have no use at all for six-furlong races, which they consider absurd. Endurance is what they look for in a horse, and the race that pleases them is a matter of miles. On this occasion they are persuaded to be content with a distance of four times round the racecourse

[1] The bow of Pandarus described by Homer was apparently much the same as those used in the Hindu Kush to-day.

for the larger ponies, and three times for the smaller ones. After this most popular event the day's programme is at an end, and the people wend their way back to Gilgit to make night hideous—to our ideas at least—with the playing of their bands and dancing, not simply for an hour or two, but even until "the early rising, rosy-fingered dawn appears."

CHAPTER XVI

GILGITI LEGENDS

I.—HOW SOGLIO THE DAINYAL SAVED THE PEOPLE BUT LOST HIS OWN LIFE

In Gilgit there are very few remains, the work of men's hands, to form a nucleus round which history and legend may be woven. The silent hills gaze down on the Gilgit of to-day as they did in the years gone by, but they, almost alone, are the link with the dim past. The few actual works of the hands of former generations, which do still exist, all have stories of some sort attached to them, some delightfully vague, others more explicit, but for all that not necessarily any the more probable. For instance, in the Agency garden there is a stone which is said to have formed part of Shri Badat's fort, though it is now generally called Shri Badat's Saddle—quite the most uncomfortable saddle ever made, I should think—and near the parade-ground stands a stone pillar, also said to have been part of the same building.

The two stones may possibly have been what they are reputed to have been; but Yathini, the stone figure carved upon the face of the rock at the mouth of the Kirgah nullah, cannot by any stretch of the imagination be accepted as once having been the sister of Shri Badat, as popular legend would have it. Still, the story is a weird one, quite typical of the country, and therefore not uninteresting.

In the days of long ago, when Shri Badat, the man-eater, ruled over Gilgit, the people of the country lived in fear and trembling of their ruler, but none dared protest or raise a hand to throw off the tyrant's yoke. For was not Shri Badat, named Adam Khor, more than mortal man, being born of the Giants and akin to the Fairies? Much as the people feared Shri Badat, their fear and resentment of his cruelty was not to be compared to that which they felt for his sister Yathini (the Giantess). For Yathini, who shared her brother's liking for human flesh, had taken up her abode on the cliffs which lie between the Naupur and Kirgah nullahs[1] overlooking the road to Punial and Yasin, whence she swooped down on the passers-by and devoured them. One half of all who passed did she thus devour, so that the dwellers in Basin village scarce dared to come out of their houses to till their fields, and none of the inhabitants of the Gilgit valley dared pass by Yathini's stronghold to take their flocks up the Kirgah nullah to the summer grazing grounds.

Now there lived in Gilgit in those days one Soglio, a Dainyal (witch-doctor), who knew and could converse with the Rashis and Fairies, and whose prophecies were famous throughout the country. This Soglio, seeing the terror of his compatriots, and the number of his friends who were killed by Yathini, became very sorrowful, and determined to try and deliver the country from her tyranny. Accordingly, having called several brave men who were his boon companions, he imparted to them his plans and gained their confidence and approval. So one day Soglio and his friends set out for the Kirgah nullah,

[1] Kirgah: this big nullah, which drains into the Gilgit River about three miles above Gilgit, runs right up to the peaks overlooking Tangir and Darel in the lower Indus Valley, in a curve which is said to resemble an elephant's trunk (in Shina, "Khar"). The second half of the name "gah" is the ordinary Shina word for nullah.

and quickly reached the base of the cliffs on which Yathini lived. Having reached this spot, his companions sat down, whilst Soglio lighting a fire of "chili" (juniper) wood inhaled the smoke and ate some of the bitter leaves, as is the custom of the Dainyals, and began to dance. And as he danced, the witches' frenzy came upon him, and he began to sing the "Gano," holding in his hand a pebble the while. Now the "Gano" is the witches' "Song of Binding," and when the stone is thrown towards a certain person, at the end of the song that person becomes "bound" by the spells which the Dainyal may cast over him.

Thus—pebble in hand—Soglio sang:

"I will bind, I will bind, I will bind sure and fast,
Till I sing me the Wiyo[1] the binding shall last.
I bind with sure spells Trakhan's fairy Zooli,
And with her her daughter, the lovely Hazooli.
I will bind Ding the Giant, and Ganooli of Yun,
—That bright shining fairy that men call the Moon—
Yea, though Ding be the Giant of the Earth's lower regions,
I will bind him with spells, and Earth's animal legions.
The colt of a mare and the young of an ass,
The lamb of a sheep, 'neath my spells all must pass;
The kid of a goat and all living things,
The soles of their feet, and the flap of their wings;
The cows in the pasture, the markhor on the mountain,
The swirl of the river and the foam of the fountain;
The green upper pastures, the ripe fields of maize,
The gun of the hunter, and the game that he slays:
The fields of the Fairies shall all be bound; then
Both weak, wailing women and strong fighting men.
The Way of the Giants and the Stars of the Skies,
The whole World! all Creation—and all it implies.
The key of the Demons, the fortress of Fairies;
I will bind seven hundred fair daughters of Peris:

[1] Wiyo: the Wiyo is the witches' "Song of Releasing," as opposed to the "Gano," the "Song of Binding."

The key of Bathelo—the Fort of the Djins—
The springs of the Ocean, the outlet of springs.
I will bind Suma Ding, the Giant of the Earth;
I will bind all Creation unto death from its birth;
The snow on the mountains, the valleys' warm rains;
The green upper-pastures, the crop-bearing plains;
I will bind the dark branches of all Chili trees,
The Fairies' green banners that wave in the breeze;
The mouths of all serpents, the voice of the flute;
The booming of drums, and the strings of the lute:
I will bind too, Yudeni[1]—Trakhan's Fairy Drum—
That sounds of itself with deep booming thrum.
And Soni the Giantess will I bind now,
Then last will I bind me the calf of a cow."

When Yathini heard the sound of singing and the beating of drums, and saw the smoke rising from the fire, she came down at once, the lust of blood burning in her eyes, to see whom she might devour. She arrived as Soglio was chanting the "Gano," and stood watching in amazement the men who had dared to come dancing and singing so near to her dwelling. And when Soglio came to the words of the "Gano" which run, "Ho! I will bind the way of Giants!" he danced towards Yathini and threw the pebble at her feet, whereat the Giantess stepped back against the cliff. Then Soglio, without pause, changed the tenor of his song, "O Yathini, beautiful princess, do you not know that to-day your father has died?" Now Yathini hearing the news smote her right hand upon her breast in sorrow, and Soglio, who was watching, drew out a long iron peg which he had fashioned, and over which he had already muttered incantations, and leaping forward drove it with all his might into Yathini, so that her right hand was pinned to her breast. With such might and main did he strike with the sharp-pointed iron that the

[1] Yudeni: this is the fairy drum mentioned by Colonel Durand in his delightful book, *The Making of a Frontier.*

weapon transfixed Yathini and pinned her to the cliff. Then continuing his song, Soglio the Dainyal sang: "O Yathini, do you not know that to-day your brother Adam Khor is also dead?" And again the Giantess in her grief at the news smote her left hand upon her thigh; and Soglio taking another peg transfixed her as before, so that she was now firmly pinned to the cliff, and both her hands were powerless. Then the Dainyal, taking up again the time and rhythm of the "Gano" or "Song of Binding," sang out other spells and turned Yathini into an image of stone, and went back to Gilgit with his companions, rejoicing.

Next day Soglio sent for the Zaitus [1] and told them to summon all the people of Gilgit; and when they were collected on the polo ground he told them of the good news, that Yathini the Giantess would trouble them no more. And all the people rejoiced greatly and praised Soglio; but before they departed to their homes Soglio called a meeting of all the headmen and elders. As soon as they were come together, he told them that when he died they must take his body and bury it at the feet of the stone image, which was Yathini the Giantess; for if this were not done, at his death the spell would be removed, and Yathini would again prey upon the people of Gilgit. And all those present promised that this should be done, and departed. For the next few days all the Gilgit world spoke of nothing but Soglio, and how he had freed them from the rapacious Giantess, and the instructions that he had given for his burial. And as they discussed the affair and thought it over, they began to say, "Who knows where or when

[1] Zaitus: these men were officials under the old Ras of Gilgit, and their duties seem to have been the same as those of the modern village chowkidar; such as reporting crimes, calling together the people, providing labour, &c.

Soglio will die? He is a Dainyal; perhaps the fairies may fly away with him. Perhaps he may fall into the river and be drowned; or again he may go on a journey to a far country and die there. Then what will happen? We shall not have his body to bury at the feet of Yathini, and then she will return and take toll of us again."

So the Trangphas[1] and elders took secret counsel among themselves, and decided that Soglio must die for the common good; and the next day poor Soglio was set upon and killed, and with all due ceremony buried at the feet of Yathini. Thus the people of Gilgit were freed for ever, and Soglio the Dainyal lies at the feet of Yathini the Giantess, who stands there still, a figure of stone, just as Soglio pinned her to the rocks centuries ago.

[1] Trangpha: a headman. This is a Balti word from "trang," a half, and "pha" or "pah," meaning "the man of," in exactly the same way as the Hindustani "wallah." In the old days the Trangpha was responsible for the revenue of his village being paid to the ruler, and seems to have been allowed to keep half of it for himself. On asking Baltis where they come from, one often hears this word "pah" used, as in the answer "Skardu-pah," "I am a man of Skardu"; "Tak-pah," "I am a man of Tak."

CHAPTER XVII

GILGITI LEGENDS (*continued*)

II.—SHAMSHER THE FAIRY PRINCE FROM SKARDU

Another name which is still famous in Gilgit, and one which is insolubly connected with that of Shri Badat, is Shamsher, son of Azur. As far as I am aware there is nothing now standing to which we may point and say, "That was Azuré Shamsher's!" but the scenes of his various exploits are probably in the main much the same as when he lived. It is said that he was the first Mahomedan ruler of Gilgit, and the accounts of the manner in which he came to rule and introduced the Mahomedan faith into Gilgit are preserved in the story and song of Azuré Shamsher.

. . . . . .

One day during the reign of Shri Badat, Adam Khor, the folks of Dainyor village were astonished to see three strangers suddenly appear on the edge of the Dainyor nullah, where the foot-hills merge into the plain. No one had seen them arrive, which was not wonderful; for they were in reality the three brothers Shamsher, Khushru, and Jamshid, fairy-born princes, who had flown over the hill-tops from Skardu and alighted at Dainyor. But now that they had come, the quick eyes of the Dainyoris soon made them out, and filled with curiosity the men working in the fields, and the boys tending the village goats called out to one another, "See three strange men have come." Thus the news

soon spread from mouth to mouth, and the men gathering together said, "Let us go and see who these strangers may be," and forthwith went to greet them. And when they drew near the strangers greeted them with quaint greetings, which were really nothing but the universal Mahomedan greeting, "Salâm Aleikum," but the Dainyoris understood them not, for as yet the word of the Prophet had not reached Gilgit, nor were the inhabitants converted to Islam.

Now it so happened that as they stood there wondering at the strange words which they heard, a wild ox of the purest white appeared on the hill-side above them; whereupon Khushru and Jamshid bade their brother draw his bow and shoot it. At this Shamsher demurred, saying, "It is for you, my elders, to shoot first." But his brothers said, "No, do you shoot." So Shamsher, who was the youngest, prepared his bow and fitted an arrow upon the string, whilst all the Dainyoris stood round and marvelled, for the ox was so far off that it was barely discernible to the naked eye. But Shamsher, without moving from where he stood, sped his shaft, which struck the ox and brought it to earth; then having instructed the wondering Dainyoris how to kill the beast in the Mussulman fashion, he bade them run and "halal" it and bring it back with them. So the Dianyoris ran off in great glee, saying amongst themselves, now it is clear that these strangers are fairy born, for who else could shoot an animal from so far—farther than a man's voice might carry from hill to hill. So they took the knife and killed the animal, saying "Bismillah," as Shamsher had taught them; so that this was the first occasion on which a beast was "halaled" according to Mahomedan rites in Gilgit country.

Having brought in the meat and taken the three brothers to their village, Jamshid bade them take out

the liver of the ox and cook it ; and when it was cooked, Jamshid and Khushru took the dish and placed it before Shamsher that he might eat of it. Again Shamsher hesitated, saying, "I am the youngest and should eat last," but his brothers overruled him once more, maintaining that as he had shot the animal, it was right that he should partake of it first. So Shamsher ate some of the cooked meat. Then Jamshid and Khushru suddenly jumping into the air flew away, and Shamsher also in alarm arose and tried to fly after them, but found that by eating the liver of the ox he had lost his powers of flight. Thus was Shamsher deserted by his brothers, and had perforce to stay in Dainyor, where he settled down and lived for some time, much honoured and respected by the Dainyoris on account of his superhuman birth and powers.

One day Shamsher was found by his new companions looking to his bow and arrows, and on being asked the reason, told them that he had seen some markhor on the slopes above Naupur on the far side of the Gilgit River, and wished to go after them. His friends wondered how Shamsher had seen the markhor at a distance of several miles, but remembering how he had shot the wild ox when first he came, they put it down to his supernatural powers, and asked no questions. So Shamsher, taking with him several picked followers, crossed the Gilgit River on a raft below its junction with the Kanjut stream, and spent the morning in pursuit of the markhor, which he finally shot in a marvellous manner, just as he had shot the white ox. By the time the animal had been "halaled" and its skin removed, it was midday, and Shamsher and his companions were hot and thirsty. Glancing below them towards Naupur, they saw a shady garden through which a stream of water bubbled cool and inviting from a crystal clear spring ; making their

way thither, they refreshed themselves with water from the spring, and then threw themselves down in the shade and went to sleep.

Now it so happened that the Princess Miyo Khai Soni, daughter of Adam Khor, was wont to spend the summer months in a house at Naupur to avoid the heat of the Gilgit valley, and this garden and spring belonged to her. Perhaps, too, she was afraid of her father, Adam Khor, and was glad to be removed from the sight of his cruelties, of which she was an unwilling witness when living in his fort down below. Thus it was that one of the princess's handmaidens, strolling in the shade of the trees, came upon the sleeping huntsmen, and quietly retreating ran back and told her mistress.

The princess on hearing the news was filled with indignant anger, and ordered the trespassers to be seized and brought before her at once. So Shamsher and his companions were seized, and the princess prepared to vent her anger upon her prisoners. But on seeing Shamsher the feeling of anger left her heart, and instead of addressing him with rough words, she asked him who he and his men might be, and whence they had come. Shamsher, who was graced with the beauty of his fairy ancestors and was strong and brave, answered all her questions with such courtly grace that Miyo Khai Soni found herself more and more attracted to him, and asked him and his companions to stay a while and rest. This they were glad to do, so a feast was prepared, and late into the night they feasted and revelled in the house of Soni the princess, whose smiles and caresses soon won the heart of Shamsher. But when morning came Shamsher sadly told Soni that though he loved her he must depart and never see her again; for was he not a poor stranger and a Mussulman, with whom the great Adam Khor would never allow his daughter to wed.

But at last Soni, with tears and entreaties, overcame him, and persuaded him to stay and consent to a secret union, to which all her household swore secrecy, for they loved their mistress, and looked with favour upon the handsome young stranger.

So Shamsher stayed and was secretly married to the princess, whilst his companions departed to Dainyor, having first sworn to come to his assistance whenever he needed them. When Shamsher had been married to Soni for some time and had learned the details of the cruel tyranny of Adam Khor the Ra, his heart went out to the poor people of Gilgit who were so oppressed, and he determined to try and overcome Adam Khor and make himself ruler of Gilgit. But he knew that this Adam Khor, whom all men so feared and hated, was the descendant of giants, and therefore invulnerable to the assaults of mortal men with earthly weapons, and that only by destroying his soul might Shri Badat be overthrown. To do this, Shamsher must gain a knowledge of what Shri Badat's soul was made, and this he determined to do with the help of Soni his wife, who was devoted to himself and his cause. So after laying his plans and telling Soni what she should do, he sent her down to her father's fort in Gilgit to carry out the foremost of his schemes.

It was a fine autumn day when the leaves of the trees had begun to turn yellow that Soni went down to the fort of the Ra, her father. Dressed in robes of mourning, and wailing and lamenting as she went, she entered the house of Adam Khor, who, on seeing her thus, asked her what might be the cause of her grief. Soni, expressing joy and surprise at finding her father alive, told him between her sobs how a strange Dainyal had come to Naupur and prophesied that on the day on which the leaves of the trees commenced to turn yellow,

Adam Khor, the Ra of Gilgit, would die. For this reason, having seen the autumn tints of some of the trees in her garden, she had come down to bewail the death of her father. Hearing this, Adam Khor laughed a boisterous laugh and bade his daughter dry her tears, saying, "How can I die? for I am Adam Khor, the son of giants invulnerable to all mortal ills and dangers. Only my soul is vulnerable, and how can my soul be destroyed when no man knows of what it is made?" Then Miyo Khai Soni dried her tears and said, "This is indeed joyful news to me, but tell me, my father, the secret of your soul, so that, knowing, I may guard against evil and not again experience such grief and alarm as I have now suffered through the lies of this Dainyal!" In this manner, with artful persuasions and cunning arguments, did Soni persuade her father to entrust to her the secret of his soul, and at last, somewhat reluctantly, did he tell her that his soul was made of Ghi,[1] and that fire was the only means by which it might be destroyed. That night Soni remained in Shri Badat's fort, returning next day to her husband, who anxiously awaited her. On hearing the news which Soni brought, Shamsher sent for his Dainyori friends and confided to them the plans which he had formed for the overthrow of Adam Khor.

During the next few days the conspiracy was secretly spread abroad, the Gilgitis gladly throwing in their lot with Shamsher, for they longed to be rid of Adam Khor and his oppression. When all was arranged, Soni again went down to her father's fort, saying that now winter was approaching she was coming down from Naupur to live with him. That night, according to the plans which Shamsher had made, each man in Gilgit, silently in the darkness, brought a bundle of wood and straw which he placed outside the fort of Adam Khor the Ra,

[1] Clarified butter.

until a low wall of inflammables was formed right round the fort. Then the men of Dainyor, running quickly forward with torches, set a light to the wood simultaneously on all sides. As soon as the fire was lighted, Adam Khor began to feel faint and uneasy, but for a time Soni his daughter contrived to pacify him. But at last, when the night wind fanned the flames and the fire began to burn brightly all round, Soni could no longer restrain her father, and he insisted upon going out to see what was the matter. On finding himself encircled by a ring of fire, and feeling his heart fast melting within him, Adam Khor with a shout of rage leaped into the air and flew away towards Ishkoman, where he lives amongst the glaciers to this day, cooling his burnt-up soul.

And every year in the autumn, on the anniversary of the day on which Adam Khor was driven from Gilgit by Shamsher, the good folks of Gilgit light fires in their houses and keep them burning all night, lest the dreaded tyrant should return from his glacier home to wreak vengeance upon them. When this ceremony, which they call the Taleno, is accomplished and it is found that Adam Khor has not returned, then on the morrow they observe the Nisalo festival, sacrificing goats, and rejoicing that another year has passed without the return of Adam Khor. And in their gladness they do not forget their deliverer, Shamsher Khan, the son of Azur, and in his honour sing "The Song of Shamsher."

THE SONG OF SHAMSHER

Hail, Azur's mighty son, Shamsher! Thou art of giant birth,
Lighting on Dainyor's snows so fair thou first appeared on earth.
On the banks of Gilgit's rushing stream, thy fatal dart has sped,
And on the hills above Basin a milk-white ox lies dead.

Well done, oh Azur's son Shamsher, that hast of war the art!
With wondrous strength and aim so true thou'st flung thy fleeting dart.
Struck by thy shaft, and cut by knife, the milk-white ox is slain.
Beside a fire the meat is roast on Dainyor's fertile plain.

Hail to thee, Azur's son Shamsher! Thou art of fairy birth,
Flying from mountain-tops afar thy presence lights our earth.
Beside fair Soni's shady spring a good deed thou hast done,
When maiden's tears and silken words Shri Badat's secret won.

Shabash![1] Now Azur's son Shamsher sits firm on Gilgit's throne.
And Adam Khor, that tyrant base, to Ishkoman's ice has flown.
With Dainyor's faithful men at night thou ringed with fire his fort,
And to thy breast in love's delight fair Soni thou hast caught.[2]

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[1] Shabash! = Well done! Hurrah!

[2] In the Shina, which is very crude, there are several more verses, but as these are chiefly repetitions in slightly varying words, I have only attempted to give the "spirit" of the first four verses, adhering to the literal translation as far as is possible in English.

CHAPTER XVIII

GILGITI LEGENDS (*continued*)

III.—SU MALIK RA OF GILGIT

In a conspicuous place upon a spur above the village of Jutial, near Gilgit, stands what appears to be an old Buddhist stupa. The people of Gilgit to-day do not know what it really is, and assign to it many different sources of origin. Some say it once marked the boundary of the Chinese Empire ; others, that it was set up by the three Balti princes who invaded Gilgit, Yasin, and Chitral, and planted the chenar trees which still stand near Chitral fort. These same three heroes in the song, in which the first line of each verse commences, "A la! puché Makpūné puché," "Oh, sons, sons of Makpun!" showing that they were sprung from Brak Makpun, the original Rajah of Skardu, are credited with many famous deeds of arms, including the conquest of Chitral and the planting of the chenar trees, and also the devastation of the village of Chamugarh, which is situated on the left bank of the Gilgit River about twelve miles above its junction with the Indus.

This place they are said to have destroyed by cutting off the water-supply, and indeed there is a considerable tract of land which was obviously once under cultivation which cannot now be cultivated owing to lack of water ; but this seems really to be due to the natural deepening of the nullah bed below the level of the surrounding country. The three Baltis must have been men of

THE OLD AGENCY GARDEN, GILGIT.

considerable ability to have done as much as it seems they really did perform, and such was the impression made upon the people through whose country they passed, that it is still said of them that their arrangement of post-runners on the lines of communication were so good as to enable their meals cooked for them in Skardu to reach them before they had had time to get cold. If the Indus Valley between Skardu and Bunji was then anything like it is now, they must have really been very glad to get anything through in a fortnight!

Other Gilgitis, perhaps most, say that the stupa-like monument was put up by Tajik Moghul, King of Badakshan, before he returned to his own country after overrunning Yasin and Gilgit. If this was so, it must have occurred when a Ra of the name of Su Malik ruled in Gilgit, for although in telling the history of Su Malik it is never admitted that Tajik Moghul successfully invaded Gilgit, even legend allows that Su Malik was captured and held prisoner by the Badakshani king. However, as the legend "points a moral" and reminds one somewhat of the escape of our own Richard Cœur de Lion, I will endeavour to give it in full, as it is usually told in Gilgit.

. . . . . .

"When in anger strike not with the weapon that is in thine hand, but go seek others lest thou doest an injustice." Such were the words of advice given to Su Malik, Ra of Gilgit, by a wise old man of Yasin some three hundred odd years ago, when the wedding of Su Malik's sister Firmaish, with the ruler of Yasin, was being celebrated. The wedding ceremonies were over, the bridegroom's party were ready to start on their return journey, and the bride alone lingered, bidding a tender farewell to her mother. Outside the bride's home the Yasin party stood waiting, and knowing that

the delay was all part of the show they, according to custom, sang to entice her forth :—

" Come out, thou mother's darling! Why tarriest thou so long?
Come forth, thou fée of the fountain! Hearest thou not our song?
Come out, oh maid of the pearly teeth, girl with the locks of gold!
Come forth, thou beauteous maiden, that we may thy charms behold!"

Then the bride, blushing yet tearful at leaving her old home and the friends of her youth, had come forth; and the Yasin party had ceased singing, giving place to the bride's relations and friends, who to cheer and console her had sung :—

" Phunāré mulāi na ro, thei rong būjé
Thei hiya dija mulāi, thei rong būjé."

" Weep not thus, oh flowerlike maid!
Lest the roses from thy cheeks do fade.
By weeping thus thy heart will burn,
And thy roses into lilies turn."

Thus cheered and consoled, the bride went off with her lord and master, the wedding guests melted away, and with them the wise old man who had so well gauged the young Ra's impetuous character when he gave him such sage advice. And Su Malik treasured the words of the old man in his heart, and knowing full well his own hasty temper, determined to act upon this good counsel. One day the remembrance of the old Yasini's words was to stand him in good stead.

Now in time it happened that Tajik Moghul, who was king of Badakshan, claimed suzerainty over Yasin and demanded tribute, which the ruler, who was the husband of Firmaish, refused to pay. So Tajik Moghul gathered together his forces and marched over the Darkot Pass to attack Yasin; when Firmaish heard of the approach of his army, she sent swift messengers to

Su Malik her brother to come to the assistance of her husband. Su Malik, on receiving this appeal for help, at once marched by forced marches to Yasin, and arrived there on the same day as Tajik Moghul and his army. The two armies encamped on opposite banks of the river, and that evening a champion of the Badakshani force came to the edge of the stream, and, "bold as a lion of his strength," challenged any warrior amongst his enemies to trials of strength. Su Malik himself, who was renowned for his bravery and strength, took up the challenge; and whatsoever the Badakshani did, Su Malik did the same, but with even greater ease. At last the strong man of Badakshan seized upon an unfortunate goat which happened to come down to the river to drink, and lifting it above his head, hurled it out over the river with such force that it fell on the far bank in the camp of the Gilgiti army. Nothing daunted, Su Malik seized upon a large willow tree that grew near by, and uprooting it, flung it across the river, though it was far heavier than many goats.

At this feat a ringing cheer went up from the combined Gilgit and Yasin camp, but a deep silence fell upon the camp of Tajik Moghul as he and his army saw their champion retreating crestfallen before Su Malik, for they

> "With awe and wonder saw
> His strength surpassing Nature's law."

The possessor of such strength must, they thought, be endowed with power divine, and the defeat of their champion boded ill-success in the morrow's battle. Indeed this doubt and fear grew upon them to such an extent that the whole Badakshani army, leaving their camp fires burning, retreated during the night.

In the morning, when Su Malik found that his enemies had fled, he started off in hot pursuit, and

catching them up near the Darkot Pass, harried them in their retreat, and inflicted severe loss upon them. But the Fates willed it that the Gilgitis should not have it all their own way, and just when Su Malik, having driven the enemy over the pass, had given the order to desist from pursuing, he slipped and fell. He was instantly seized by the rearguard of the retreating enemy, and carried off in triumph to Badakshan. But his captors knew not that it was the Ra of Gilgit whom they had taken, and when they reached Badakshan Su Malik was sold as a slave, and was made to fetch wood and draw water.

One day, when the captive Ra had been working as a slave for some years, he was found sitting by the roadside weeping over the skeleton of a horse. On being asked why he thus wept, he replied that to Tajik Moghul the King alone would he tell the cause of his grief. Then some one told the king of this strange thing, and when the king heard it he sent for Su Malik and demanded to know why he thus cried over the remains of a horse. Thus questioned, Su Malik answered, "All my life have I loved horses, and I saw from the skeleton of this one that in life it must have been of such excellence as is seldom seen." Then the king further questioned him about horses, and finding that he indeed had a wonderful knowledge of them and their management, he placed Su Malik in charge of the royal stables.

Now whilst Su Malik was in charge of the stables it so happened that one of the king's favourite mares gave birth to a foal, the like of which had never before been seen for promise of beauty and speed. Both the foal and its mother nearly died, but both were finally saved by the care and skill of Su Malik, at which Tajik Moghul was so pleased that he gave orders that the train-

ing of the foal was to be left entirely to Su Malik, who requested this favour in place of the reward which the king wished to give him. Day by day the foal grew and improved in looks and pace, until at last it was reported ready for Tajik Moghul to ride. Then an auspicious day was chosen on which the king should mount this now famous horse for the first time in view of his assembled court. When all was ready the horse was brought, and Su Malik asked permission to ride him round to show off his paces to the king and the admiring crowd; and Tajik Moghul, who was proud of his possession, and knew how well Su Malik's admirable horsemanship would show the animal off, gladly gave his consent. Thereupon Su Malik mounted the horse, and riding a little way into the open, turned towards the king and his court and said, "Tajik Moghul! I, your captive, am Su Malik, Ra of Gilgit, and now I am going to return to Gilgit on your horse. Good-bye!" Then, setting spurs to his steed, he galloped off. Before Tajik Moghul and his retinue had recovered from their surprise Su Malik had gained a good start, and being mounted on the best of horses, which he himself had trained, he soon left all pursuit far behind, and passing through Wakhan he reached Gilgit.

On arrival at his palace he looked quietly in at the door, and all his joy at reaching home turned to sorrow and anger when he saw his wife, whom he loved, sitting beside a stalwart and handsome young man with whom she was engaged in intimate conversation. Su Malik's first impulse was to rush in and kill them both as they sat there; but remembering the words of the old Yasini, 'In anger kill not with the weapon which is in thy hand, but go seek others," he crept quietly away, and went in search of weapons other than the dagger at his belt, which was the only one he possessed.

Turning away, he bethought him of a man who had been one of his trusted followers at the time of his capture, and made his way towards his house. This man, now an old greybeard, recognised the Ra, and greeted him with tears of joy; but seeing Su Malik's dark and sorrowful looks, he asked him why he was thus sad when he should have been rejoicing. Then Su Malik told him how he had seen his wife sitting with the young man, and proceeded to give a description of the youth's appearance. On hearing this description his old friend laughed heartily and said, "In truth the young man of whom you are so jealous is none other than your son, whom you left years ago a baby in his mother's arms." Thus the anger of Su Malik was turned to joy, and he went in to his wife and his son, and they and all Gilgit rejoiced at the return of their Ra, who himself blessed the name of the old man of Yasin who had given him such good advice in the time of his youth.

CHAPTER XIX

GILGITI LEGENDS (*continued*)

IV.—"MĀLÉ KĀRÉ PŪCHETE"

"MĀLÉ KĀRÉ PŪCHETE!" I heard it spoken in anger. Again I heard it said in fun. What did it mean? I knew enough of the Shina dialect to know that it meant literally, "The father's basket for the son," but what basket? what father? what son? and why this talk of baskets, when the foregoing subject of discussion had been the non-payment of two tolas of gold which was said to be owing? That was beyond me, but I determined to find out what it meant. It did not take me long to find out that it was a Shina proverb implying, "Do as you would be done by," or, "As you deal with others, so will you some day be dealt with yourself." But it was a long while before I discovered how these words came to have this particular meaning, and when I did get hold of the story, I found that the saying went back many years to the time of Alexander the Great, or at any rate was supposed to do so, and connected with it were fables regarding the life of the Great Conqueror, which also throw some light upon the customs of the tribes of the Hindu Kush, however fabulous they may be in themselves. The Shina proverb is now perhaps the last trace of a barbarous old custom to linger on in the daily life of the people.

In the days of Sultan Sekunder Zul Kurnain there were strict laws with regard to the disposal of the old

and feeble. The country was poor, the land producing barely enough to support the population, as is even still the case in Hunza to this day. Families and villagers existed solely by their fighting strength, and the weakest went to the wall. Frequent raids and feuds kept down the population, but this was not enough. No useless mouths could be fed; and the old and feeble who could no longer wield the sword, bend a bow or follow the plough, were disposed of in the following manner, so as not to be a tax upon the younger and more agile. They were carried up to the top of a high precipice in a basket, and pushed over the edge!

One morning in these "good old days" a man might have been seen toiling up the steep track which led up to the edge of the chasm below Gor. Chaumuri frowned down from above, the Indus rushed along in the valley below unseen in its deep-cut channel; whilst to the right lay the narrow gorge, a gloomy sombre place, a place of death into which the sun's rays scarcely penetrate until high noon. On the man's back was a basket, and in the basket was his aged father. The young man's heart was sorrowful, for he loved his father, but the stern and cruel laws of the country could not be disobeyed, for the discovery of the disobedience meant death to himself and his whole family. As he reached the overhanging rock at the edge of the chasm and lowered the basket to the ground, to his surprise, the sound of merry laughter issued from the basket. That one who was literally on the edge of the valley of death should laugh thus mirthfully surprised him, and he said, "Babo, why do you laugh thus when you are face to face with death? ought you not rather to weep?" And the old man answered, "My son, I laugh when I think how I myself carried my father in my basket to this spot and hurled him over the precipice; and now you are going to throw

me over, but in turn your son will put you in the same basket and carry you up here to death. The father's basket is for the son too!" And hearing these words the son cried out, "Oh, my father, is there no way that I can save thee?" and the voice of his father answered from the basket, "Listen! thou knowest that the back of our house is formed by a large rock. Remain here till dark, and then return with me to the house and dig a hole under the rock; I will live in this hole, and thou canst give me a little food and water each day. The mouth of my cave can be hidden, and no one will know that I am there." So the son did as his father suggested, and the old man lived in the cave under the rock for many days.

And it came about that Badshah Sekunder Zul Kurnain visited the country, and all the inhabitants went to make submission to the Great King, and for many days a great Durbar was held each day. At the close of each day's Durbar, the king, Alexander the Great, proclaimed, "To the man who will show me the way to Zulimat-i-Ab-i-Hiyat, the spring of the waters of life, that I may drink of its waters, will I give great honour and riches." But the men attending the Durbar were all young and ignorant, for all the wise old men of the country had been killed, and none spoke in answer to the king's proclamation.

When the young man returned to the house where his father was hid, his father asked him what had been done and discussed at the Durbar; and his son told him of how the Great King was desirous of drinking of the waters of life, but that no man could tell him how to reach the spring. At this the old man remained for a while buried in deep thought; but at last he spoke, saying, "Go to the king to-morrow and claim thy reward, for I will tell thee how the spring of the waters

of life is to be found." And then he told his son how the king might procure the water that he desired to drink. That he should travel so many days in such and such a direction, after which he would come to a land of darkness through which a man must journey for seven days, in order to reach the spring which was called Zulimat-i-Ab-i-Hiyat; and through the land of darkness he should find the path in this manner. He should cause to be driven with him a number of mares who had with them foals, that the mares, being able to see in the dark, would follow the path that the men could not see, and finally becoming thirsty would instinctively make for the water. Each mare would whinny to its foal to follow it and by its voice also lead the men through the darkness. And when they came to the place of the spring, they would find many springs, but only one of them was Zulimat-i-Ab-i-Hiyat, which was to be known in this way. By the king's party was to be carried a dried fish which they should place in the water of each spring; and when it was placed in the spring Zulimat-i-Ab-i-Hiyat, the fish would come to life, by which sign they might know that they had indeed come to the spring of the waters of life. So the next day the young man went to the court of the king and making obeisance said, "Oh Protector of the Poor and Ruler of the Universe, if it be thy pleasure, I can tell how the spring of the waters of life may be found." And the king said, "Speak!" and the young man told him all that his father had said, but of his father he said nothing. And when Alexander heard the story he said, "For many days you have been present at my court and have known that I desired knowledge of the spring, but never before to-day have you spoken. By this I know, that some one else has told you this, and you yourself have only just acquired

the knowledge; bring before me the man from whom you obtained your information." Then a great fear seized the man and he tried to deny and to make excuse, but the king said, "No, some one has told you this, for well I know that it is not in the nature of man that he should remain silent when by speaking he may acquire great honour and riches." So when the man saw that excuses and denials would avail him nothing, he made petition that if he brought his informant before the king, and any fault was thereby found in him, he might be given a free pardon. And when the king consented, he told before all the court how that he had spared his father and hidden him in his house. And he called his father before the king; and the old man told the king all he knew of the spring of the waters of life. And Alexander not only forgave him his fault, but then and there gave orders that the custom of destroying the aged should be abandoned from that day; for said he, "Now I see that though courage and strength lies in the body of the young, knowledge and wisdom is to be found only in the heads that are grey." From that time the aged folk were spared, though prisoners and malefactors were hurled from the precipice as before.

And Alexander set out for the springs; and following the instructions of the old man, after many days' journey, came to the spring of the waters of life; where he ordered his followers to fill many vessels with the water and bear them back, that he might with all due ceremony drink of the water on his return to his court. But as they travelled back, they heard a shrill voice crying piteously from the ground, and searching about they found that the voice came from a parched heap of bones. And the king said to the bones, "Who art thou, that thou criest out thus piteously?" And the

bones answered, "I am a fox that has drunk from Zulimat-i-Ab-i-Hiyat; and the waters have given me perpetual life, but not perpetual youth, and now all that remains of me is this heap of bones, and I would that I could die." Farther on they heard another voice, and on the king inquiring, the voice answered, "I am a crow that has partaken of the waters of life; see my wretched state; I would that I could die." The king, seeing that nothing remained of the crow but helpless skin and bones, ordered his followers to cast away all the vessels containing the water and returned to his court.

Until some twenty years ago, when there were no game laws and other signs of civilisation, and when every man kept trained hunting dogs for sport, there was still a relic of a past age; for when a litter of puppies was born, only the best that were like to turn out good hunting dogs were kept; and the owner of the dogs, taking the puppies that he did not wish to keep, gave them to his children saying, "They are useless, treat them as the useless are treated!" And the children—cruel little wretches—weaving a basket, placed the puppies in it and carried them up to the top of some cliff whence they precipitated them to death beneath. There are still many men alive who did this as children, but in another generation even this memory will have passed away; and all that will remain of the old and barbarous custom will be the proverb—"Mālé Kāré Pūchete."

CHAPTER XX

GILGITI LEGENDS (*continued*)

V.—HOW THE DYING ALEXANDER CONSOLED HIS MOTHER

"To-day
Thou knowest the whole wide world weeps with thy woe,
The grief which all hearts share grows less for one."
—*The Light of Asia.*

In the stories of Zainudin Walli and the snakes, of the snake on the Kaji Nag, of Yathini the giantess, it may be clearly seen how in countries where various religions have each in turn been in vogue, and conquest and changes of government have been frequent, the present inhabitants form legends and stories to suit their own particular ideas and belief upon those of past generations. The Kashmiri villager who lives near Aishmukam knows nothing of the ancient snake worship once prevailing in that beautiful country, but his Mussulman forefathers found the image of the snake in the cave and proceeded to account for its presence in their own way, which is quite good enough for the inhabitant of the valley to-day, who sees no trace of an ancient faith peeping out through the veil of a story which redounds so much credit to a saint of his own.

The dweller in Gilgit knows nothing of the gentle faith of Siddartha, of the few bold Chinese pilgrims who braved the terrors of his mountainous land where, as they recorded, "great poison dragons rolled down

rocks upon the travellers," rather than take the longer and more usual route through Darel to the Gandhara cities of Swat and Yusaf Zai; nor of the men of the old faith who carved the figure upon the rocks near Naupur. But the figure is there, and is duly accounted for by the story of Soglio the Dainyal and Yathini the giantess, which must be true, as a man once said to me, for not only is the figure there, but the marks of the nails through the hands and breast. "Truly," he added, "there were people and things in those days of which we know very little," and I readily agreed with him.

Gilgit is, indeed, a mine of folklore gems; some pure fairy tales, others equally fabulous but based upon some old historical fact, religious belief, or local custom of actual occurrence. We have the snakes guarding the coral tree on the summit of Nanga Parbat, a quaint parallel with the Kashmiri story of the snake on the Kaji Nag, whose mate lived on Nanga Parbat.

We have Buddhist remains with various legends attached to them, and the rude figures of ibex and markhor scratched on the rock, frankly attributed to the fairies. However little the following story of Alexander's death and burial may be in accordance with the facts of history, it is of some interest; firstly, in that it makes mention of the name Badshah Sekunder Zul Kurnain by which he is always known; and, secondly, because it bears a curious resemblance to the Buddhist story, told so beautifully in the words of Sir Edwin Arnold, quoted above, as well as Arabic and other stories of Alexander, quoted in a previous chapter.

My companion on the hill-side, who could neither read nor write, but who was well versed in folklore and the ways of the Devs and fairies, had been talking of Alexander the Great, exchanging his stories for such historical facts as I was able to give him. "But why," I

asked, "do you call him Badshah Sekunder Zul Kurnain? his name was only Sekunder; whence the Zul Kurnain?" It was, he answered, after the king's death, and in this manner that the name Sekunder Zul Kurnain was given him; and though the night wind blew cold and Orion had risen well above the hill-tops, he roused the fire with his foot and embarked upon the following story.

When Sekunder lay dying, his chief thought was not of death in itself, but of the sorrow that his dying would cause his mother. All through his life his love for his mother had been such as to cause him to guard her from every hardship and evil, and to maintain her in such luxury and comfort that the sorrows and trials of life should be reduced to a minimum. And now that beloved mother was to lose her only son; this was what troubled Alexander. So he sent for his most trusted officers and bade his mother also come and see him. To them he gave three orders with regard to the disposal of his body when he died. In those days it was the custom of the country to take their dead to a place of burning by the riverside called "Jainkish," and having there cremated them, to convey the bones and ashes to "Dewaro" at the foot of the hills for burial. But contrary to custom, Alexander ordered them to strip bare his body, and then to carry it through his treasury with arms outstretched and hands open; and thus to bury it without burning. For, said he, by this all men shall know that even though a man may conquer the world, he must leave it even as he entered it, naked as a newborn babe, and carrying none of his riches with him. Secondly, he bade his mother, after disposing of his body, hold a great burial feast. But she must only ask to attend the feast those in whose houses neither father, mother, child nor slave had ever died. Thirdly, that on the seventh day after his funeral his mother should come

to his grave and, calling him by name, tell him of all that had occurred at the feast of mourning. These three orders the king gave, and when his mother and his great officers had sworn to carry out his wishes he turned from them and died.

Great was the sorrow of his ministers, his generals, and his army at the death of the king, but greater and more inconsolable was the anguish of the bereaved mother. On the next day, according to the king's instructions, his body was laid upon a bier, naked and with arms outstretched; and, because the bier and cortège could not pass through the doors of the treasury, the walls were broken down on either side and the body borne through the gaps. And all the people who were there saw into the treasury through the breach in the walls, and noted the chests of gold and silver and precious stones, and saw, too, how that he who had owned all this vast wealth passed through in death, bare and empty-handed, leaving all behind him. And the king's mother ordered all the people to be summoned to the funeral feast as her son had commanded; but none should attend who had lost father, mother, wife, brother, or any other relation or even servant. So the messengers went forth to summon the guests, but finding no house at the door of which the hand of Death had refrained from knocking, they returned and told the king's mother. And again she sent them to search for and call the guests for the feast, and yet again they returned from their fruitless search. But in her sorrow the mother saw not the meaning of her son's command, but sorrowed the more that she could not obey his orders with regard to the feast.

So on the seventh day after the funeral, with heavy heart and mournful mien she made her way to the king's tomb, and looking into the vault, she called aloud,

"Sekunder"; and at her call a thousand voices answered her, "Who art thou, and whom callest thou"? to which the king's mother answered, "I am the mother of Sekunder, and I call my son." Then again the thousand voices answered, "We are all called Sekunder." Whereupon spoke the queen-mother, saying, "My son is Badshah Sekunder, and it is to him that I call"; to which an hundred voices answered, "We are many kings of that name here amongst the dead." So the queen a third time said, "My son to whom I call is Badshah Sekunder Zul Kurnain"; to which summons the voice of her illustrious son alone answered, "My mother, why didst thou not hold a funeral feast as I requested thee?" And his mother answered, "I searched the whole world for such as knew not death to attend the feast, but none could be found; therefore I could not hold the feast." Then the voice of the king, Alexander the Great, spoke, saying, "It is well. Go in peace and weep not; for now thou knowest that thy sorrow is common to the whole world: for not only hast thou failed to find one who has not experienced it, but thou hast also seen that many of the same name as your son, even many kings of that name, have already passed to the realms of death leaving relations and friends and all worldly goods behind them. Weep no more; but rather in thy knowledge go and comfort those that mourn, thinking that no grief is like unto their grief."

Thus was the sorrowing mother of Alexander the Great comforted by her son, who to this day is known as Badshah Sekunder Zul Kurnain.

CHAPTER XXI

HUNZA AND NAGAR

As has been related, it was Trakhan Ra of Gilgit who established his nephews, Girkis and Mughlot, in Hunza and Nagar, as the first rulers of those states.

Now let us see what manner of country it is that he gave to his two nephews, and something of their descendants who live there to this day.

Crossing the Gilgit River near the old fort, a ride of some four or five miles downstream brings one to its confluence with the Kanjut stream, which drains Hunza and Nagar, and such great glaciers as Shingshal, Passu, and Batur on the Hunza side, and Hispar and others on the Nagar side. After an easy ride of some eighteen miles level going (for this country), we reach the pretty little resthouse and village of Nomal; the approach being through a willow avenue edged with grass, small irises, and wild roses, which remind one not a little of more fertile Kashmir. Leaving Nomal and its picturesque old fort behind, the road becomes more arduous and gives a foretaste of what may be expected in this roughest of rough countries, where the roughness is all on a stupendous scale. The road, in itself excellent, thanks to the efforts of a succession of British Divisional Engineers, runs up and down and round enormous "paris," amongst which is the famous Chechar Pari, about three miles on the Gilgit side of Chalt. The valley here becomes very narrow, and is flanked

GILGIT FORT.

on either side by huge cliffs, which form, as it were, a gate into Hunza and Nagar; and a gate, moreover, which could be easily closed, and when once closed would need a lot of forcing.

Following the river through this narrow gate, the valley once more opens out into the broad alluvial fan upon which Chalt is situated. This fan is very typical of those upon which most of the villages of the country stand, and spreads itself out in a manner which reminds one of a peacock's tail, and helps one to realise why these fans sometimes came to be given such a name as Dasht-i-Taus, the Peacock Plain.

Riding through the green cultivation of Chalt towards the little bungalow, numerous magpies may be seen, shining blue-black and glossy white in their spring plumage; at this, the beginning of the pairing season, darting after one another, chattering and squabbling; most quarrelsome birds, in fact. These birds, called by the natives of the country "kissippi," appear to be the same as our English magpies, and replace on the northern side of the Himalaya the pretty, long-tailed, blue, grey, and white birds with yellow claws and beaks of the southern slopes, which in Kashmir they call "sanjara." Nowhere in Kashmir proper will you find the former, and nowhere beyond the Zojila, Burzil, or Kamre Passes will you find the latter.

From Chalt, still following the right bank of the Kanjut stream, the Chaprot nullah is crossed, and then again the road zigzags up and across another colossal "pari." About opposite this great mountain buttress, on the far bank of the river a long steep spur juts out from the main hills, almost entirely blocking the whole valley against an enemy advancing from Gilgit. For some reason, this magnificent position was not defended by the enemy in the Hunza-Nagar campaign, and traces

of the old road made over a "kotal" in the spur by our little force may still be seen.

Behind this ridge lies Sekunderabad, which at the time of the fighting was an uninhabited, waterless plain. This tract of land has since been opened up by the present Mir of Nagar, who has brought water on to it by two fine "kuls," and the new village has been named Sekunderabad after him.

The Kanjut stream is here crossed by a good suspension-bridge, to the left, or Nagar bank—the direct road to Hunza following the right bank; and from this point onwards, except for crossing numerous deep, narrow gorges, it is fairly level going through smiling villages.

There is no doubt about it that the Nagar men have the best of it in the matter of land, for on the Hunza side the hills are bare and precipitous, and there appear to be only two possible places for villages and cultivation, the small village of Mayun, and the larger one of Hini; whereas on the Nagar side, village succeeds village at short intervals, all the way to Nagar itself.

This is all historical ground; ground over which a small body of troops, gallantly led by a handful of British officers, forced their way, and established for good and all the prestige of the British arms in the Hindu Kush. The story of the brilliant little Hunza-Nagar campaign has been told by others, and recorded by the able pens of eye-witnesses, such as Knight and Colonel Durand himself; so let us ride on past Nilt and its famous steep-sided nullah, where Lance Naik Nagdu, of the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops, earned immortal fame by finding a way up the cliffs into the heart of the position, whence the enemy defied our troops for eighteen days after we had driven them from their fort in Nilt; and so on, past an old Buddhist

stupa, through the village of Thol with its little fort, and Ghulmit, shady with the grand old chenar trees which grow round the grave of some old Persian Saiyad who is buried there. But before reaching this shrine one must dismount; for it is said that anyone passing the spot without dismounting will assuredly experience a fall from his horse in the near future, or suffer from some illness!

At Pissan, a little farther on, a glacier thrusts its snout forth into the valley, and is only divided by a single ridge from the more famous Minnapin glacier, a jagged, broken mass of ice close to the village of that name. These glaciers run down from the great peak marked on the map and generally known as Rakaposhi, the mighty sides of which one skirts after crossing the river at Sekunderabad; but no one here, or in Hunza either, knows it by that name. Gather together a group of men and children in Ghulmit, for instance, and ask them where is Rakaposhi? They will not have the vaguest idea, unless, perhaps, some old headman, or some youngster of good birth, who has been schooled in Gilgit, and knows the weird ways of sahibs, steps forward and offers the information that the big mountain above is called Rakaposhi by the sahib log, for some reason best known to themselves, but that no one had ever heard it called that until the sahibs came. In the country where it stands it is called Doomani[1] (cloudland).

From Sumair, a village some six miles short of Nagar itself, one may either cross over to Hunza by fording the Nagar stream (provided that it is at the time of year fordable), and by a suspension-bridge over the Gujal branch of the Kanjut River; or push on to Nagar. Sekunder Khan, the Mir of Nagar, is a charm-

[1] From "Doom," the Shina word for smoke, mist, or cloud.

ing host, and if we push on to Nagar we may be assured of the warmest hospitality, including such entertainments as polo, dancing, archery, &c.; besides a glorious view at sunset from Nagar towards Hopar and Hispar, and that grand peak on the confines of Baltistan which, nightly catching the rays of the setting sun, is called Ganesh Chish,[1] The Golden Peak.

Beyond Hopar there is not much of interest, except to the energetic mountaineer who may cross over into Baltistan by the Hispar glacier; there being one easy route which takes about eight days, and another, very difficult, which, it is said, may be covered in three days.

Near the village of Hopar the Barafu glacier (so called locally) and the Hopar glacier meet. At the time when the writer visited these glaciers, the Hopar was at a very low level, with the black end of the Barafu (the Hopar is mostly of white ice) rising perhaps as much as a hundred feet above it; but these glaciers are liable to great changes, and the surface of the Hopar is sometimes on a level with that of the Barafu, in front of which it crosses. Indeed, all the glaciers in this part of the world seem to be very erratic; for the Minnapin glacier, too, has advanced and crumpled up considerably, and it is not so long ago—about fifteen years, I am given to understand—that the end of the Barafu was far removed from the Hopar, which it now unceremoniously jostles.

Riding back from the glaciers, one gets a fine view over the dividing ridge between Hunza and Nagar, towards the magnificent crags which rise precipitously behind Baltit, the capital of Hunza. On the extreme right of these crags, as seen from Nagar, is the curious square-topped peak known locally as Boyié Shawaran,

[1] The Baroshushki words "Ganesh," gold, and "Chish," a head or peak. The Queens of Hunza are also locally called by the title Ganesh.

the Djin's Polo Ground, whilst farther along to the left is a sharp-pointed, snow-white needle, called Bobili Matting, Bobili's Peak (lit. sharp point), from a strange legend concerning a woman of that name.

It is said that a long while ago there came from Lingur, in Baltistan, a famous magician named Kesari, who settled in Hunza and married Bobili, a maiden of the country. When he had been living in Hunza for some time he received news from his relations in Baltistan, by means of carrier-pigeons, that a man more powerful than himself in magic, one Baghal Daning Gialpho, had destroyed his house and carried off his property, including Longa Brongo, the wife whom he had left behind in Lingur. So, taking Bobili in his arms, he flew up to the top of the sharp peak, and giving her one seer of cheena and a fowl, told her to drop one grain of cheena every day, and left her with the assurance that he would come back for her upon the day when the last grain was dropped. But cheena is a very fine seed, and apparently the supply is not yet exhausted, for the Hunza men say that they sometimes hear her singing and the cock crowing, and still call the mountain Bobili Matting.

The bare intervening ridge, over which may be seen Bobili Matting, formed a fine skirmishing ground for the Hunza and Nagar men, who have been sworn enemies almost ever since the days of Girkis and Mughlot; but, as a matter of fact, very little fighting of a serious nature ever took place; the fighting, with the exception of one pitched battle on this plateau, and another down in Gilgit, having been entirely a matter of raid and counter-raid, and highway robbery on a small scale. Such fighting as there was between the two states seems to have been carried on in a manner more humane than might be expected in such an uncivilised corner of the globe.

Prisoners taken were not mercilessly killed, but were as a rule kept until they might be exchanged for persons of equivalent rank captured by the other side. Some of them were sent up to Hispar, which is still used by the Mir of Nagar as a sort of penal settlement, to which troublesome subjects may be sent to cool their ardour amidst the snow and ice of the mighty glacier.

Before saying good-bye to Nagar and crossing over to Hunza, a few words more as to the descent of the rulers of these states. Both the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar, together with the Ra of Gilgit, claim descent from Alexander the Great, who, they say, married a woman of the country from whom they are sprung. Alexander may perhaps have come as near to Hunza as Kulm on the Chinese frontier, but whether the story of the marriage was based upon that of the fair Candace, Queen of Marakanda, or some local beauty, is not known. Anyhow, the subjects of the two chiefs are not likely to openly dispute the claim, whilst the descent from Trakhan, Girkis, and Mughlot is sufficiently authentic, and redounds sufficient credit to the descendants to satisfy their dignity.

The Mir of Nagar is, it seems, directly descended from Mughlot; but although the Mir of Hunza claims direct descent from Girkis, it is apparently only through the female line. Probably a happy medium between the Mir's claim of direct descent and the popular story that one Ayesho came down from heaven to rule over Hunza is as near as we shall ever get to the matter, so that the following story, strangely embroidered though it be, may prove as interesting and as nearly correct as any other version.

Girkis, the first ruler of Hunza, had only two children, a boy who died young, and a daughter, a beautiful girl, by name Noor. After the death of her father, Noor

governed the country of Hunza, as it then was, only one small clan, for a period of about five years. Over this small clan alone did Noor rule; but there were three other more powerful clans—the Hussaingutz in Altit, the Amarchating in Ganesh, and the Tapkianz in Hassanabad,[1] who all in turn oppressed Noor and her people, so that they became discontented and wished for a strong man to govern and guide them. When this was the state of affairs prevailing in Hunza, it so happened that a man named Chooshoo Bhoto had been out hunting with his bow and arrows, and having seen an eagle with something on one of its claws, had shot it. The thing on the bird's leg turned out to be a bracelet, which was most cunningly wrought, and was a source of wonderment to the good folks of Hunza, who in these days knew none but the rudest of arts and crafts.

So in this their hour of need they called Chooshoo Bhoto and appointed him as their envoy, telling him to travel through Wakhan towards Shignan, and to offer the wonderful bangle and the throne of Hunza to the first suitable man he came across.

So Chooshoo Bhoto travelled for days, and at last in Shignan came upon a man threshing corn, who on learning his errand took him to his master, the eventual outcome of the introduction being that the old Shignani Malik's son accepted the bangle and the throne of Hunza.

When Chooshoo Bhoto returned with his newly caught king, Noor and her people turned out to greet them with song and dance; and the people of Nagar and others, hearing the sounds of festivity, shouted across the river to ask the cause, to which the Hunza men answered: "Ayesho has come to us!" Now this

[1] These clans and villages all exist to-day.

was a pretty play upon words, for in their tongue Ayesho may mean either "A blessing has come upon," or "A heaven-born has been sent to us"; Ayesh meaning either heaven or happiness. So the Shignani, whose real name was never known, was always called Ayesho, and married Noor, from which union there were born seven sons, of whom the eldest, Myuri Thum, was to overcome the other clans and consolidate Hunza in its present form.

A volume might be written upon the origin, history, and customs of the people of Hunza, but it is altogether beyond the scope of the knowledge and capability of the present writer. It needs an expert philologist, an expert in the history and customs of our Aryan ancestors, to do the matter justice, and tell us whether these fine, fair-skinned mountaineers are the remnant of some Aryan tribe who, instead of moving into Europe or pressing down into India to displace the Dravidian tribes of that country, elected to remain behind in the mountain-fastnesses where they were able to maintain their nationality, or whether they are from some other source, and simply call their country "Hunza," "the Land of the Bow," from the Baroshushki word for the bows of ibex horn which they all carried until recently, and with which they were so expert.

Be that as it may, there are certain characteristics and certain customs which may interest the ordinary reader or traveller; customs which, for all we know, may be very ancient and help the expert to decide the origin of these hardy folk. The clans mentioned above, as being in existence in the time of Ayesho and Noor, still live on to-day, for each village is divided into four "koms" or clans, of which the following may be given as examples:—

1. Diramiting
2. Kurokutz
3. Burataling
4. Burung

} In the villages of Haiderabad and Aliabad.

1. Hakalokutz
2. Hussaingutz
3. Chushoroting
4. Kanokutz

} In Altit.

and others in other places.

The musicians are of low birth, and all belong to one "kom," called Beritz, living together in a separate quarter of the village. The Mirs and their families belong to no "kom." With regard to marriage, a custom has been found to exist in these "koms," which prevails also, at least on somewhat similar lines, amongst many primitive peoples, such as the Aruntas of Australia for instance, namely, the rule that no man may marry a woman of his own "kom." In this manner close in-breeding is prevented, but the wife, after marriage, becomes a member of her husband's clan.

Although so much was heard of murders in Hunza and Nagar when we first came into contact with those countries, these murders for the most part only concerned members of the ruling families—who certainly murdered one another in the most heartless and cold-blooded manner—and perhaps such other persons of importance, such as Wazirs and Trangphas, who were especially attached to, or feared by, either faction. The poor people do not seem to have been given to murders and vendettas as are Pathans, which supposition is rather borne out by the fact that there has been only one murder during the last twenty years or so recorded in the two states.

Indeed, there are numerous unwritten laws which are apparently adhered to, by all at any rate but the members of the reigning houses, which not only tend towards peace and good order, but in their spirit may almost be said to be chivalrous. For instance, if one kom has a quarrel with another, it is quite contrary to the law of koms for a third to join in and assist either combatant, unless a fourth also joins the other side. The same rule of fair-play stands good for individuals, one against one, two against two, and so on; but never two against one, or three against two. Again, if any man insults or wrongs a girl, the whole of her kom consider her as a daughter of the clan, and take steps to see that the insult is avenged or justice done. Moreover, there is a regular scale of fines in sheep, goats, or gold-dust to be levied under certain given circumstances, such as in the case of two men fighting. One man may, on account of insult or other such cause, give another a good thrashing, but he must not do him actual bodily harm, such as cracking his skull, breaking his arm, or gouging out an eye; and if he does so, his opponent's eye or arm will cost him so much gold-dust. If, on the other hand, two women fight, they are *both* fined at once, irrespective of right or wrong. No! women are not encouraged to cause a disturbance in the Hindu Kush!

Climbing up from the river through Ganesh village to Baltit, where the Mir's fort stands imposingly upon a small hill, one of the first details that strikes anyone coming direct from Nagar is the difference between the Hunza and the Nagar men. The latter, as their Hunza neighbours say of them, appear to lack in looks and spirits the brightness which their country lacks, as if the sun, which shines so little on to their side of the valley, shone equally little upon their lives and natures.

As a matter of fact, the poor man of Nagar is prob-

ably on the whole happier and better off than a man of similar social standing in Hunza, but certainly their darker complexions, longer features (as a rule this is so, I think), and their dark, almost black chogas and caps give them an appearance of gloominess. The men of this particular village, Ganesh, are probably as a whole darker in complexion than those of the rest of Hunza, and it seems possible that they are to a large extent from a different stock; for not only are they all Shiahs, whereas the rest of the men of Hunza are Mahomedans of the Mullai sect, but they also speak the Shina dialect rather than Baroshushki, the common language of Hunza and Nagar. This fact rather supports the theory that there are many of them the descendants of the Gilgiti colonists planted there by Trakhan Ra of Gilgit when he first conquered the country. Be this as it may, the large percentage of white chogas and "kois" (woollen caps) in a Hunza village contrast brightly with the dark ones of the Nagar men, and the Hunza fellows are certainly a cheery-looking set of ruffians, amongst whom many fair skins and pink cheeks may be seen, and blue eyes and fair hair are by no means uncommon.

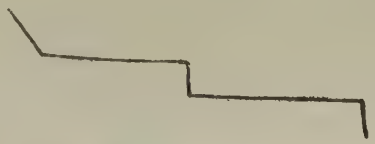
And a question that keeps recurring to one is: how is it that these men are so fine physically on the scanty fare that they get? Roughly speaking, the food of a poor family in Hunza is as follows. For two months in the year they feed on tromba;[1] for five months on grim, the common grain of the country; for another two months on wheat flour; and for the remainder of the year on mulberries, apricots, and other fruits, either dried or fresh, eked out with a little bread of whatever flour they have in store. Although to our ideas this

[1] Tromba: a fine grain, which grows well at high altitudes. In Kashmir red bears are very fond of it.

fare sounds scanty enough, the deficiency of the food-supply is often exaggerated and made out to be greater than it really is; a single handful of dried apricots per diem being spoken of as the portion of a full-grown man for two months in the year. I have been told that this exaggeration of facts was started both in Hunza and Nagar at a time when they thought that their lands were being assessed by us for taxation. But without doubt the poorer people of Hunza have a very hard time in this respect, and unless more land can be given them either in the vicinity of Gilgit, or possibly in Gujal, the distress will in time become really serious.

They are a most healthy people, and in these times of peace the death-rate is very low, whilst the birth-rate is proportionately high, as is shown by the figures of the last census. Until fresh land other than that round about Hunza itself is opened up for cultivation by having water brought on to it, the Hunza man is certainly very badly off in the matter of land; and it strikes one at once how every square foot of land at present available has already been brought under cultivation. "Kuls," as the irrigation channels are called, have been constructed for miles along the hill-sides and across the faces of impossible-looking precipices in a manner which might do credit to the most skilful engineer, and a vast amount of labour is expended in building up and maintaining the little terraced fields on the steep hill-sides, a small strip of ground sometimes being supported by a high stone wall, the surface area of which is as great as that of the field it supports. One may see, too, a difference between the formation of the fields in Nagar and those in Hunza. Although in both cases the cultivation is more or less terraced, the surface of the Hunza fields is made level—that is to say, higher retaining walls are generally required, and each field forms

a fairly acute angle with the slope of the hillside, thus:



whereas the Nagar men have a sloping surface to their fields, conforming more nearly with the natural slope of the hillside, thus:

The reason for this difference is, I believe, firstly, because the hills on the Nagar side of the valley are for the most part of a much more gentle slope than those on the Hunza side; and, secondly, the difference is a matter of irrigation. In Hunza many people are all dependent upon one large kul for their water, so that times have to be allotted to them for watering their fields, village by village, and kom by kom, which means that it always falls to some of them to turn out and water their ground by night, attending to each field separately. In Nagar, where there are a larger number of small kuls flowing from various directions, the people are seldom obliged to irrigate by night. But even if obliged to do so, a Nagar man can water his ground without having to sit up all night to watch it; for the fields being upon a gentle slope, he can just turn the water on to one and let it find its own way down into the next, without fear of the retaining wall being carried away, as would probably occur in a Hunza field if it were left flooded for any length of time.

The way in which quite big kuls are brought across the face of perpendicular cliffs is very clever. Although

gunpowder is manufactured in both Hunza and Nagar, blasting such vast masses of rock would be out of the question, so the difficulty is overcome by the kuls being, not cut out of the rock, but built on to the face of the rock, and it is quite wonderful how securely they stand.

Baltit, the present capital of Hunza, is situated near to the point where the Nagar stream joins the main Kanjut stream. Above this point the country is known as Hunza for a short distance, beyond which it is known generally as Gujal, right up to the Chinese and Afghan borders. The main Gujal valley is pretty well known nowadays, and is mainly of interest in that it leads to Chinese and Russian Turkestan via the Killik and Mintaka Passes; but on either side of the main valley lie other smaller ones of less importance but of some interest, if for no other reason, simply because they are so little known. These are nullahs, such as the Batur, which holds the biggest glacier in Hunza territory, and culminates in a fine peak, called locally Payak Ting, which must, I fancy, be well over 20,000 feet, though I have never seen it marked upon any map or mentioned in any book; and the Shingshal nullah, interesting as being the flood-terror of the country, a narrow, unpretentious-looking gorge at its mouth, but one which drains the snows of the Shingshal Pamir, and holds glaciers which have so advanced as to dam up these waters. Should they at any time be unable to escape underneath the ice of the glaciers, the waters of the lake thus formed might burst their barrier and cause flood and destruction far down the valley, to the very Indus. Again, there is the Murkkom nullah, which joins the Shingshal at its head, and forms an alternative route by which the Shingshalis may reach their homes, the Shingshal itself being impassable during the summer

months, and also on the same side the Kunjarab, whilst on the right bank, above the Passu and Batur nullahs, lies the Chapursan.

As this valley is said to be connected with Trakhan, of whom previous mention has been made, and also has some legends all its own, a description of a flying visit to Gujal to see what the country is like, and to the Chapursan valley, famous for its shrine and its ibex, may be of interest to the reader. An account of each day's march and of all the villages passed through would be tedious, but there are some places on the road which are in themselves of some little interest. In fact Altit, the first village one comes to after leaving Baltit, is one of these places, being a picturesque spot and the old capital of Hunza, where the graves of most of the previous Thums of Hunza are still to be seen in a separate little cemetery.

The polo ground is small but a very pretty one, shady with fine trees and having quite good turf. On the extreme edge of the cliffs, above the river, stands the old fort, or castle, said to have been built by Kesari, who left his wife on top of Bobili Matting; and a fine kul, which is still called Kesari Dala, is also attributed to him. Certain it is that in the old days the Baltis were far famed for their skill in building forts, to which fact the name Baltit probably bears testimony, the fort there, according to some accounts, having also been constructed by Balti labour. But Altit, with its quaint fort, pretty polo ground, and fine old walnut-tree under which, until recently, the Dainyals used to dance, has just lately been the scene of strange happenings which for some time set the tongues of all Hunza a-wagging from the highest to the lowest. As it is quite "the last word" in fairy stories, the most modern and best authenticated (if one may say so), the reader may care

to hear the facts of the case, and try to solve the mystery to his own satisfaction in whatever manner suits him best. The story appears to be like one of those ghost-stories which we feel almost certain is a case of rats, bats, or wind, though we cannot prove that it is all or any one of them. Therefore the writer offers no opinion other than the suggestion that the man may possibly have died of tetanus. The germ of this disease exists in large quantities in the ground in some places in India, such as Kasauli, where the earth is said to be full of it, so that it is not impossible that it might also exist in Hunza, though I have no knowledge or proof that this is so. As far as the main facts go, such as the man breaking his toe and his eventual death, I can vouch for their being true; and as for the rest, I can only add that every man in Hunza firmly believed them, and, as far as one could make out, nobody was suspected of foul play: therefore by process of elimination only the fairies remain, so it must be the fairies!

In a certain house in Altit lived a man, his wife, and their family. For some time the wife had been ill, but this was not the only evil that had fallen upon the family, for every night some evilly-disposed person or thing threw stones through the smoke-hole in the roof of the hut. No one was ever seen doing it, but certain it was that the stones came and continued to come, apparently of their own accord, until each day in the morning there was quite a pile of them on the floor of the hut. After three days this shower of stones became too much of a good thing, and the kom, or clan, to which the afflicted family belonged, held a council of war, the outcome of which was, that six sturdy men decided to sit up in the house that night and attempt to solve the mystery. Two of these men belonged to the same kom as the inhabitants of the hut, and four others were

introduced from outside clans. So that night they went to the house and began their vigil with the family, the sick woman lying on the floor amongst them.

The stone-thrower, however, was not to be put off, and soon the shower of stones commenced as usual. At first nothing at all could be seen, but presently the watchers saw indistinctly what appeared to be the form of a woman through the smoke-hole, and they could just make out in the dark the ornaments on her breast, such as women of the country often wear. The stoutest-hearted of the six men shouted up to the intruder saying, "Whoever you are, come show yourself and try conclusions with me!" or some such words, whereupon the "thing" up above came forward and thrust its head and shoulders through the smoke-hole, advancing and retreating several times. At this the watchers were indeed very frightened, for now the thing appeared in the form of a leopard! One man frankly admits that from this time he hid his face in his choga, and remained cowering thus for the rest of the night, for they all now perceived that the "thing" must assuredly be some fairy or spirit. Of the six, Nazar Shah was the only one to keep up his courage, and repeated his challenge, whereat the evil thing jumped down through the smoke-hole to near where the sick woman lay, and before the eyes of all of them became—a cat!

Whether this diminution of the size of their antagonist rekindled their courage, does not transpire in the popular version of the story, but at any rate they sufficiently recovered their wits to close the smoke-hole and pursue the cat round the room. In the midst of this chaos, the cat jumped down through the hole in the floor into the lower room, practically an underground cavern, such as all houses in Hunza have.

Nazar Shah was again the only man brave enough to descend into Tophet, where he eventually managed to capture the cat. To catch puss was one thing, but to kill her apparently quite another matter, for all Nazar Shah's efforts to do so with a knife proved futile, and not a mark nor a wound did she show in response to his blows. A thick stick was now brought into play, but although he plied it vigorously (for two hours according to the story!), the cat refused to die, until at last Nazar Shah killed it by strangling it with his hands, in doing which the cat scratched him on the big toe of one foot. In the morning the body of the cat was carried all round Hunza, and everyone was asked if they owned it or knew to whom it belonged; but no one claimed it.

Now it so happens that there is a man in Hunza, one of the family of a headman, who is famous for seeing visions, dreaming dreams, and foretelling future events. A day or two later this man told everyone that he had had a vision in which he saw the fairies holding a court, in the midst of whom two fairies were crying and saying that a man had killed their sister by strangling her, and that in revenge they would kill the man in question just as he had killed their sister. This vision and statement coming on top of the other occurrences, and from the mouth of one who was well known throughout Hunza in this respect, kindled a keener interest than ever in the whole matter, only to be further enhanced by what took place that same afternoon. Nazar Shah, as strong and healthy a young man as any to be found, even in this land of fine physique, was one of the Hunza tug-o'-war team, and that evening came out with the rest of the team to practise on the polo ground. At the very first pull Nazar Shah's toe, the one which had come in contact

with the cat, broke! He had his toe bound up, and but for this was apparently as hale and hearty as ever, when the Mir and the Wazir of Hunza, who chanced to be present, asked him how he came to break his toe. In answer to their inquiries he told them the whole story of the cat, the stones, "etc.," which was the first the Mir had heard of it.

Some few days later, Nazar Shah called to his father, who had gone outside to say his early morning prayers, and when the old man came, said to him: "Father, I am dying! something is strangling me just as I strangled that cat!" His father could see nothing, but in a little while Nazar Shah died. His throat was swollen and showed marks of pressure, the backs of his hands were swollen and discoloured, and there had been slight bleeding from the nose, just as in the case of the cat, in fact!

Such is the story, which was at the time one of the chief topics of conversation in Hunza; and as the Mir himself said: What is one to think? When six men all tell the same story it is difficult to refute it, and moreover almost everyone in Hunza saw the dead cat. Nazar Shah apparently had no enemies, for the Mir and his Wazir made minute inquiries about this and the matter of foul play, and moreover the Mir himself said that such things generally come to light quickly in Hunza, where everyone knows of any feuds that may exist, or quarrel which may take place, besides which it is not a country of murders.

The next two villages beyond Altit are Mahomedabad and Ata-abad. It was between these two places that in about 1855 a big landslip occurred on the hills on the Nagar, or left bank of the river, and formed a dam right across the stream, which in turn converted the whole valley into a lake right up to Ghulmit, the

lower portion of which was washed away. The mention of a lake naturally turns one's thoughts to the question of boats, but apparently no one in Hunza had ever seen such a thing in those days, except a certain Persian Saiyad who had travelled in Kashmir and elsewhere, and had seen them there. He, with great display, made a boat and launched it upon the waters with his servant inside it (he was for taking no risks himself). It is recorded that the craft sank immediately, and this was the first and last boating excursion that ever took place in Hunza.

It must not be supposed from this, however, that the Hunza men are in any way afraid of water, for as a matter of fact the reverse is the case. Many of them are indeed expert swimmers, and the manner in which they will swim horses across the rushing Kanjut torrent cannot but compel the admiration of anyone who sees them.

Ghulmit, a large village on the right bank of the stream, is a picturesque place, and is the capital of Gujal. The Mir of Hunza has quite a comfortable house in Ghulmit, near which there grows a very fine species of poplar tree which originally came from Yarkand. In growth it is tall and stately, as is the common poplar, but it is a tree with finer branches and foliage, the leaves being more like those of a maple.

The Gujalis all originally come from Wakhan, and speak the Wakhi language. They wear the same kind of clothing as the Hunza men, from whom they differ but slightly in outward appearance. I noticed, however, one man wearing a choga woven from the down of ducks, which was very soft, and must be extremely warm. They maintain the same "clan" system in their villages as prevails in Hunza proper, but their

headmen are called Arbabs instead of Trangphas. The Gujali houses are mostly of the Chitrali pattern, and many of them appear to be quite roomy and clean, in fact altogether a great improvement upon the semi-underground hovels of the Hunza folk.

Quite close to Ghulmit is the little village of Ghulkin and the glacier of the same name. Between this place and the more famous Passu glacier there is, at a considerable altitude above the main valley, a lake known as Borit Lake, which is famous for duck and geese, though at the time when I saw it, a solitary coot was the only bird to be seen. The water of the lake, which is about a quarter of a mile wide, and about a mile long, appeared to me to be slightly warm and also a trifle brackish. On the edge of the lake is the small village of Borit, and below it a larger village by name Sussaini, where a curious murder and suicide had taken place not long previous to my visit.

A certain man who was a leper had two sons, one of whom was half-witted. The father one day had an altercation with his idiot son, and becoming very angry took him down to the river and killed him. Later he became filled with remorse for his hasty action, or with despondency on account of his own hopeless state, and gave it out publicly that he had determined to commit suicide. Next morning the whole village accompanied him down to a sandy bay by the river side where before them all he dug a grave for himself and then lay down in it, at the same time requesting his other son to hand him his gun which he had brought with him. This the son did, but when the muzzle was placed against his head and the trigger pressed by his own hand the cap missed fire and the gun refused to go off. Nothing dismayed the father handed the weapon back to his son to be reloaded, after which he took it again and shot himself.

Suicide is apparently rather common in Gujal, though the men are generally considered to be rather soft and faint-hearted, or, as the Mir of Hunza himself expressed it, the Gujalis are goat-hearted (*buz-dil*) in war but perfect heroes at committing suicide! Never before, however, had anyone made such a "public function" of it!

There is, too, a certain amount of leprosy prevalent in Gujal, nine cases, I think, being at that time recorded round about Ghulmit; and efforts are now being made to isolate them. The disease is said to have been introduced from Sirikol, where it is common.

Passu, a small village near the end of the glacier of the same name, recalls to me very pleasant memories. We had had a sufficiently long ride and walk to be quite glad to sit down and rest awhile and have some lunch, and this we were able to do at Passu under most pleasant conditions. Soft green turf afforded a comfortable seat, and the bole of a tree a rest for the back, whilst above us the gnarled branches and sweet blossoms of peach and apple trees formed a light shade through which was filtered the sun's grateful warmth. Gazing upwards one caught a glimpse of distant snows and bright blue sky, intensified in colour by the tracery of delicate pink, white, and green through which one saw it, and amongst which countless bees and other insects maintained a perpetual hum. In fact our immediate surroundings were more like a Devonshire orchard than anything else, a likeness which was enhanced by some local coarse brown bread and clotted cream, produced for us by the village headman and further flavoured with strawberry jam from our own tiffin basket.

The Passu glacier must at one time have advanced nearly across the main valley, as may be seen from the old bed and lateral moraines which extend far beyond the present limits of the glacier.

Until the waters become too swollen by the melting of the snows, one may ford the main stream and the Shingshal stream and thus avoid having to scramble over the Batur glacier. This glacier, which is on the opposite side of the valley to the Shingshal, is a huge mass of ice, $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide, and is, I believe, the biggest glacier in Hunza territory. It has now advanced almost across the main valley, and thus forms for a considerable distance the right bank of the stream, in the shape of high cliffs of black ice. At the point where it has advanced farthest it is now only about fifty yards from the earth cliffs which form the left bank of the stream, and it had apparently advanced about 300 yards between October and April.

Above this vast glacier is a place with the historical name of Khaibar, and, like its famous namesake near Peshawur, it is a gate which must be forced by an invading enemy from the north. It is one of the old "Darbands" of Hunza against raids from the Kirghiz and Chinese, and is certainly a very strong position. A fortified gateway, some sangars, and a tower on the far bank of the river still stand, some of which are, I fancy, the original old defences, and some perhaps built by the small British detachment which advanced as far as this after Hunza and Nagar were taken in 1891.

The road the whole way from Baltit is bad, and no animals save mountain battery mules or local ponies, which are like goats, could get along it. Beyond Khuda-abad the road up the main valley to Misgar and Murkushi becomes impassable for ponies in summer, and anyone wishing to reach the Killik or Mintaka Pass must make a detour up the Chapursan valley and over the hills to rejoin the original route. The Chapursan is of interest in that it is supposed at one time to have been a fertile and populous valley, desolated by floods brought

about, so it is said, by the patron saint of the valley, who was ill-used by the inhabitants.

A short way up from the mouth of the nullah one comes upon traces of the famous Ra of Gilgit, Trakhan, for there is an excellent bridge site still called Trakhan, because he is said to have built a bridge there when he first conquered the country. Some seven or eight miles up is a shrine near which stands a pile of ibex horns, placed there as votive offerings; and in one spot there is an inscription carved upon the face of a rock, in Persian, saying, "Let no stranger set foot in this land."

Near the shrine a side nullah, called Reship Jarab, curves off from the main valley, and forms another "Darband" against raids from Afghan Wakhan. The name Reship Jarab means, in the Wakhi tongue, Whip Nullah, the straight defile of the main stream being the handle, and the curving side-nullah the lash of the whip. Both the shrine near this place, and a curious veined rock on the Wakhan side of the "Darband," are connected with Baba Ghundi, the patron saint of the valley, the rock being called Baba Ghundi's Jhool, or horse-cloth.

Until a village called Reshit is reached there are no human habitations, except in one spot named Kil, where five Hunza families have taken up land; but there are a good many points on the road which have names of their own. For instance, there is one little piece of level ground known as Spandrin, so called from the fact that it is the only spot in this valley where the spandra, an aromatic herb much sought after for use as incense, is to be found. It is just opposite Spandrin, too, that the summer route to Misgar, Murkushi, the Killik, and Kashgar branches off. This route takes its name, not from Spandrin as might be supposed, but from a patch

of willow and thorn jungle higher up, and is usually known as the Kirmin route.

Just near Kil, where the five huts are, there is another shrine, also consisting of a rock, which is said to be Baba Ghundi's Saddle. Here, too, is a pile of ibex horns. Reshit is now the largest and the highest village in this valley, and contains some thirty houses, all, I think, inhabited by Gujalis. From this place it is a good day's march to the foot of the Chillinji and Irshad passes, which form the head of the Chapursan valley and lead into Ishkoman and Chitral, and Afghan Wakhan respectively. It is during this march that one sees signs which tend to confirm the report that the Chapursan valley could at one time boast of over a thousand families. This is probably an exaggeration, but certainly at two spots above Reshit, called Ispinj and Ishkhook, there are traces of a considerable number of houses, and a good deal of cultivation.

Ishkhook is the name of a nullah and glacier on the right bank of the main stream, whence a vast mud flood seems to have come down and swamped everything. A similar mud flow, but smaller, seems to have been the cause of the destruction of Ispinj. This appears to have occurred much earlier than the bigger one from the Ishkhook nullah, and is locally said to have been caused by the Pir Baba Ghundi.

The story is that when he first arrived from Wakhan, being hungry and weary, he asked the people to give him food and rest; but the people, who in those days were all idolaters, drove him away from their doors. At last he came to a house in which there lived one poor old woman, who allowed him to enter and rest, and refreshed him with a drink of sheep's milk, which was all she had to offer him. The next morning when the Pir told the woman who had be-

friended him to remove herself and her belongings to some rising ground, she obeyed him, though all the other villagers laughed at her and thought she was mad. Their laughter, however, was soon turned to tears, for down came the flood and swept away all their houses and possessions. It is further recorded that, as the flood approached, the old woman, remembering that she had left something in her house, told the Pir, who stretched forth his spear and retrieved whatever it was she wanted from her house just as the flood was about to engulf it.

At Ispinj some ruins are still pointed out as being the remains of the house and sheepfold of the old lady whom Baba Ghundi saved; and the latter's spear, a three-pronged affair like Neptune's trident, as far as I remember, is still preserved on his grave. This is at Ziarat, higher up the valley, near the point where it bifurcates into the two passes, the Chillinji and Irshad. The grave is quite well kept by two herdsmen, who tend the flocks of yaks and goats belonging to the Mir of Hunza, and who are the only people who live there. A good number of pilgrims visit the shrine and make offerings, either in the form of ibex horns placed near the shrine, or small donations of money, cloth, and so on, to go to the herdsmen for the upkeep of the shrine.

Such then is the Chapursan valley, sometimes called the Irshad, which may have once known a degree of fertility and prosperity, such as is said to have existed. Whether it will ever know such days again is a doubtful point, but certain it is that the rising population of Hunza must expand somewhere. In the Chapursan there is the land and there is the water, but I doubt whether it will ever be popular with the fruit-loving men of Hunza, for fruit probably would not ripen,

perhaps would not even grow at that altitude; and with doubtful winters, which may arrive early and depart late, existence there must be precarious.

But who knows? In days to come, some sportsman may visit the Chapursan and find prosperous hamlets where the Baroshushki of settlers from Hunza shall have taken the place of the Wakhi tongue of the Gujalis; and leave us a record of polo played where the wild spandra now grows, and some account of the excellent bridge across the stream, the fine kuls which water the land, and busy lead mines being worked near Reshit. These things may be. For the sake of the poor overcrowded people of Hunza I hope they will; but—I am not optimistic!

CHAPTER XXII

IBEX

In a previous chapter it has been admitted that there is a considerable element of luck in shikar, and all of us have probably experienced days when we have begun to think that perhaps "le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle"! Days when we have toiled over villainous ground, and climbed perhaps almost up to the skies, in order to get above some ibex, only to find when we get there that the ibex are nowhere to be seen; or the occasion, which seems to happen in the life of every sportsman at least once, when, having aligned the sights on some noble trophy, the cartridge misses fire. But are not all such mischances and disappointments counterbalanced by the feeling of elation which we all experience when we pass the tape over the horns after a long stalk and a successful shot?

And the pleasure does not end there; for does one not have the joy of living it all over again as one sits by the fire on a cold winter's night, and looks from one to another of the various trophies that adorn the walls? Each one tells a tale, not the flattering tale of hope, but a flattering tale of prowess in the chase, of the reward that we have earned by hard work, and by pitting our wits against those of the game we were pursuing. The markhor over the door, for instance; not a very good head perhaps, but the first I ever shot, and therefore, though far surpassed both in symmetry and size by others shot later, always connected in my mind with feelings of elation

never quite equalled since. And those little goral! They stand out plain enough against the wall, but oh! how difficult they were to see on their native hill-side, where the surroundings seemed to tone so exactly with their autumn coats. And what a lot of room there seems to be for a bullet all round about a goral, as much as in the case of any animal, I think, except perhaps a chinkara. Then there are the bears, the Kashmir stags, a sambhur, and a cheetal or two, and so on, all there to conjure up pleasant dreams of the past in which all the disagreeables are forgotten. Last, but not least, come a snow-leopard and a certain ibex, close together on the wall and close together in my mind, though in life they had nothing to do with one another, for I shot them at different times and in different places. This is how they came to be linked together.

In the middle of March in the year ——, after a drive of just on 200 miles over a road much obstructed by landslips, I found myself in Srinagar, which was to be my base of operations during a long shooting trip. The ground was slushy, owing to a late fall of snow, but at the time of my arrival the weather was glorious. After a clear frosty night, the sun rose in a sky of azure to warm the sodden land, and to give to the crisp morning air that touch of softness which speaks of spring, and breathes new life into bird, beast, or flower, that has slumbered or shuddered all through the cold winter months. The brown frost-nipped grass showed slender green blades springing up to life beneath the sun's caress; the willows—the most enterprising of the tree world—showed a quantity of tender green shoots; crocuses, and here and there a few violets, were already in bloom; and amongst all the bulbuls piped a song of joy that was quite in keeping with their friendly, perky, crested little persons.

A few days later, after the usual haggling with Kashmiri merchants of all descriptions and degrees—perhaps the most plausible and importunate set of rogues in the world—I started up the Sind valley, which some people consider the most lovely in this land of beautiful valleys, and I had not come to the end of my first day's march before I found myself in snow. It covered the land as with a soft white blanket, and, soft as it was, proved better walking than the slush from which we had just emerged.

How I rejoiced in that snow at first! What a novelty, what a change it was after several hot weathers in the dusty plains of India! That first day I dug my khudstick (alpenstock) into the snow to see how deep it was, I slid down a slope of it, I made snow-balls of it to throw at anything or anybody, until the coolies who had been living in it for months past must have thought me a raving lunatic: but no matter, I enjoyed it that first day. On the second and third days my interest in snow diminished (it was now, Goodness knows, how many feet deep), and by the time I got out of it on to dry ground again I hated the very sight of it. All the way up the Sind valley my coolies and I plodded our way through snow, crossing and recrossing the winding Sind River, scrambling over avalanche slopes throughout the Gagangir-Sonamarg defile, until we debouched upon the actual marg of Sonamarg, one broad expanse of deep, soft, dazzling snow with here and there the gable of a Kashmiri house poking out of it. Such was this favourite haunt of the summer visitor to Kashmir who comes to enjoy the pure mountain air, and the multitude of flowers which then bespangle the green turf and give to the place its name of "The Golden Meadow." Baltal, too, lay buried deep in snow at an altitude of 9000 feet, at the foot of the Zojila Pass, the new rest-house being

hidden in snow, which was level with the roof of the verandah, so that one had to enter the building by a sort of burrow kept clear by a solitary chowkidar. Even in winter the Sind valley has a beauty all its own, of which, when the wind is not blowing, the great stillness is a noticeable feature. A few ubiquitous crows, some foxes and a musk-deer or two of which we saw the tracks, seemed to be the only living things besides ourselves. The snow, I think, rather magnified the vastness of the scenery by covering up and muffling everything—even the Sind River itself—which would otherwise have caused a break in the expanse, though the clearness of the atmosphere, on the other hand, tended to make distant points appear closer.

The early hours of the morning were perhaps the most beautiful. Sometimes we would set forth by the light of the brilliant morning star, the herald of the dawn so soon to come, shedding its first grey gleam upon the still white world. Then, almost suddenly, the all-enveloping greyness would be illumined by a point of roseate flame, the first rays of the rising sun tinting some towering snow peak so that for a few short moments it appeared as an ethereal, phantom light floating upon a sea of pearly grey. Then the finger of Dawn touched peak after peak in turn, making them blush a rosy hue at its touch, and soon the strengthening light creeping lower and lower down the mountains turned them from delicate pink through varying shades of gold to dazzling white, and the skies behind them gradually lost their clear steely greyness in the advancing tide of blue which overspread them, ever increasing in intensity of colour as it advanced until finally it is once more a turquoise-blue canopy over a world of sparkling, scintillating whiteness. For three days my party remained at Baltal seeing

each morning dawn and blossom into a glorious cloudless day; but for all that unable to cross the Zojila, the lowest pass in the Himalayas, I think, but quite one of the most fickle and disobliging of them all. Anyone ten miles distant, knowing that we wished to cross the pass that day, would certainly have said, I am so glad they have got such a glorious day to cross the pass. And, indeed, the days were glorious in every respect but wind. Each day we attempted to cross, and each day we had to turn back on account of the wind.

No one who has not experienced that Zojila wind at its best can fully imagine its power. It comes shrieking round a corner like a fiend, cuts through one like a knife, buffets one this way and that, and then whirls up a handful of dry powdery snow and throws it in one's face so as to blind one before delivering the final buffet which makes one stagger into a snowdrift—a departing shriek and it is gone! But only for a moment, for by the time you have struggled out of the snowdrift and got the snow out of your eyes, it is back again blowing with a wilful pertinacity that is almost human.

Even if the sahib and his shikari could make way against this mocking fiend, the poor coolies cannot; they stumble off the beaten track (if there is one at all) flounder into deep snow, collapse with their loads, and soon get so tired out that they sit down unable to go farther, and probably get frost-bitten.

In summer this pass is easy enough and one may ride over it in comfort, but in spring it is not only very trying under adverse conditions, but also dangerous. The winter route runs straight up the steep narrow gorge down which the infant Sind River runs in summer, and for the greater part of the ascent of 2300 feet

one is hemmed in by beetling cliffs and precipitous hill-sides; so that if an avalanche should come down, as they are very liable to do in the daytime during March and April, one is bottled with nowhere to run to for safety. This had happened to some unfortunate coolies a few days before we were there and seven of them were killed. Thus it behoves the traveller to cross the pass during the night, or in the very early morning whilst the snow is still hard under foot and before the midday sun has had time to melt it and start the avalanches coming down. This we did eventually on the morning of the fourth day after our arrival at Baltal, without mishap, but not without difficulty, for the wind was still strong.

The difference in one's surroundings as soon as one crosses the watershed is very remarkable. All the way from the Plain of Kashmir one had been marching up the Sind River; now, although the country on top of the pass is one unbroken stretch of snow, one realises that one is marching down the Dras River from its source. Throughout Kashmir, too, one had marched through a land of forests and valleys which would later be covered with soft green turf and multitudes of flowers.

And what is the appearance of this new land around and beyond the famous Brari Angan and Wagé Saggan, the parting of the waters? Here and there bare rocky crags, and for the rest—snow, snow, snow. Not a stick or a tree for miles. Such is the difference to be observed in most places on crossing over from the southern to the northern side of the great Himalayan barrier. Another great change noticed as soon as one crossed the watershed was, that there was no wind, and the sun beat down quite powerfully through the clear, dry, and absolutely still air, so that one might with comfort

discard the thick gloves and Balaclava cap, which only an hour before had been a necessity to prevent frost-bite. It was just like getting into a calm, sheltered harbour from a storm raging outside, and what a relief it was! Round about the first Balti village reached, black and white magpies are to be seen flitting about and settling on the bare branches of the trees, another feature of the northern side of the Himalayas, for these birds are found nowhere on the southern slopes.

At Dras, the first place of importance in Baltistan, the Kashmiri coolies who had carried the kit over the pass were paid off and their places taken by sturdy Baltis, and then the plodding through snow for mile after mile was resumed; on and on, still following the Dras River and the main trade-route to Leh and Central Asia. The sportsman making for Skardu follows this route as far as Chanegoond, where he leaves the Leh road and crosses the Shingo River—into which the Dras River flows—to Hardas on the left bank; and it was here on this particular occasion that I at last got out of snow and on to dry ground once more.

And so the journey goes on, past the gold diggings near Hardas to a little place marked by the geographers on the map as Oldthingthang, but never spoken of by the inhabitants themselves as anything but Olding, or more commonly still as Wolding; following the course of the Shingo River till it flows into the Indus and past the junction of the latter with the Shyok: then passing through Kermang, with its quaint old fort and jhula, or rope-bridge, which must be crossed by anyone wishing to go to the Khapaloo district, Skardu is reached at last.

Skardu, the old capital of Baltistan, is situated in a plain about five miles wide at its broadest, and perhaps as much as twenty miles long. It is the head-

Indus at Skardu.

quarters of the Kashmir civil administration of the country, and also boasts of a small bazaar, a post and telegraph office, and an old fort, not to mention a dispensary and the local polo ground. As far as Skardu the track is quite good, except for the snow and the discomforts from cold which, after all, are climatic faults rather than those of the road, but beyond Skardu, near Rondu and Mendi, the road, as we understand the meaning of the word, ceases to exist altogether. About five marches beyond Skardu, near Rondu and Mendi—where there is another rope-bridge—there is really no track at all in many places, and the road is bad even for Baltistan: at least it was when I was there, and still is so, I believe, though some attempts have been made to improve it. As I saw it, between Skardu and Mendi, the path was defined to some extent, and galleries had been built across the faces of precipices, and rough wooden ladders had been erected in many places, but beyond Mendi even this pretence of road-making had been omitted: it was no one's particular business to build galleries and set up ladders, so no one had done so, or intended doing so.

It was in this, the roughest part of the Indus valley, that I was persuaded to take a short cut, which forcibly brought it home to me that the shortest route is not always the quickest—for the sahib, at anyrate. Here let me speak feelingly—as I can do, for the mere thought of that short cut still gives me pins and needles in the soles of my feet—if your shikari is a man of experience, who knows the ways of sahibs and is to a great extent responsible for your safety, he will probably be quite content to let you go by the longer and easier route, if there is one; but the inexperienced local man, who is as much at home on the most appalling precipice as you are on the Grand Trunk Road, will often suggest

taking short cuts which save a long detour. Sometimes they are all right, but then, again, they are very often all wrong from your point of view; so before taking a short cut you will be wise, I think, to find out whether the long way round is not really the shortest way home for you.

To continue my own story of this particularly evil short-cut, I may say at once that nothing but the fact that I was the only white man amongst a lot of natives would have induced me to go over it at all, and that when once I was safely over I told my shikari flatly that I would not go back that way even if I had to go up to Yarkand and back over the Karakorums to avoid it. All had gone well until I came to the actual nut I had to crack, and here I was somewhat disturbed when the Balti local shikari suggested that I should remove my chaplis and go in socks, adding, for my special encouragement, that two Kashmiris wearing chaplis had been killed here two years previously, and that each year some one lost his life at this particular spot. With this advice, and an exhortation to be careful, I started, the Balti leading the way, for had he not done so I should not have known where to go at all. There appeared to be nothing but bare rock face, with such small crevices in it as Nature had seen fit to place there, and I may add that she had been most niggardly in her distribution of them. Some of them, too, were so small that one could get nothing but the toes of one's feet into them, and I fully realised that chaplis would give a very insecure hold. The corner was rounded and sheer above the Indus, some six or seven hundred feet, and one had to climb some distance down and then round it.

Now a hillman knows instinctively just where to put each foot, but anyone not born to it does not, so that it

was when I was nearing the end of the descent that I somehow got my hands and feet in the wrong cracks in the rock and found that in order to reach the next crack below I had to leave go with my hands.

There I was, all spread out upon the cliff like a beetle on a board, only far less secure, for I had no pin through the middle of me to keep me there. I began almost to envy the beetle the luxury of a pin! Many hundreds of feet below rushed the Indus, and I began to wonder whether the two Kashmiris had gone into it head or feet foremost. The Balti was below me, standing on air as far as I could make out, and urging me to lower my foot into the next foothold. With his assistance, for which I shall ever be thankful to my dying day, I managed somehow to slither my hands down the face of the rock, and lower first one foot and then the other into the crevices into which the Balti guided them; when once I had got my hands and feet into the proper places it was easier, and another twenty yards or so took me round the corner and into safety.

Thankful as I was to the excellent Balti for his assistance, without which I should most certainly have taken a record high dive into the Indus, I could not resist giving him my opinion of the short cuts in his country, which same was not a flattering one; but I fear that my explanation that I had not had the fortune to be born a markhor and did not therefore fully appreciate the benefit of such short cuts, was lost upon him, as was also my surmise that he would probably be just as scared at having to cross Piccadilly Circus as I was at being asked to take his short cuts. He acknowledged that several men lost their lives at this spot almost every year, as they would go that way in preference to going right up the nullah and over the hills; but when asked why they did not improve the road, he said that it was

quite impossible for them to do so, as they had no tools for the work and no blasting powder, of which large quantities would be required.

It was no great distance from the scene of this famous short cut—which knocked out of me at one fell blow any small pretensions I had ever entertained as to my being able to compete with a hillman on his own hill-side—to a small green oasis where we were to camp for the night. After a hasty glance at a small looking-glass to assure myself that my hair had not really turned grey, I was able to sit down to a cup of tea, and thoroughly enjoy the beauty of the small patch of greenery in which our camp was pitched—the first we had seen for miles. A few small fields of young wheat, some tall poplars, and a grove of apricot trees formed a picture that was in pleasant contrast to the bare rocky Indus valley through which we had been marching. There was a small mulberry tree, too, covered with those little unpretentious green flowers, which many kinds of birds seemed to like nipping in the bud, amongst others chukor, who fluttered up into the branches and made a sit-down meal of them, in spite of the fact that the tree was only a few yards from my tent.

Except for two small huts inhabited by two families of Bhotas from Rondu, who lived there in the summer only, there was no habitation of man within miles. From the pleasant little camping-ground it was a full day's march up the nullah to a patch of level ground at the foot of the glaciers, where I had decided to pitch a temporary shooting camp.

The lower part of the nullah, where we saw a good number of markhor, was dry and desolate, of bare rock or treacherous slopes of shale and sand. Higher up the aspect was more pleasing; there was a certain amount of green grass to be seen, and quite a number of stunted

junipers. Wild onions were sprouting up amongst the grass, and clumps of wild rhubarb gave promise of a pleasant change in the pudding line, provided that one had sufficient sugar to sweeten it with. In the lower parts "cacabis chukor" was much in evidence, and hares scuttled away in front of us wherever the boortsa scrub grew at all thick. Higher up ram chukor (the Himalayan snow-cock) sat in pairs on any point of vantage, uttering their shrill plaintive whistle of three or four rather flat notes, flying off when we got within sixty or seventy yards of them, clucking and twitting like some clockwork toy gone wrong, as they went skimming across the valley or swerving round the hill-side on their powerful wings. In several places round pug marks showed the presence of snow-leopards, and in one place a quantity of soft yellowish fur told a tale of some baby ibex killed by one of these inveterate poachers.

It was on the way up the nullah, when I was sitting under quite a fine juniper tree having some lunch, that I saw the first herd of ibex, and, as is often the case, it was movement which gave them away. Something moving caught my eye, and then, although I felt sure I had seen something move, I could make out nothing but rocks. However, a good pair of field-glasses revealed a single horn of an ibex sticking up behind a rock, and then another form, that of a female ibex, higher up the hill-side, above the single horn, but sitting so still as to appear part of the rock to a casual observer.

They were no great distance away, and when at last they moved turned out to be a herd of twelve, of which four were males, but carrying small heads only of some thirty-five to thirty-six inches. Farther up the nullah one of the men spotted another herd right across the valley, consisting of twenty-nine animals. They were too far off to attack that day, but as the big telescope showed

that some of them seemed to have good heads—it was too far to judge accurately — I determined to pay them a visit next day. That is one good point about ibex, they do not seem to move about as much as markhor and urial, and, unless they are disturbed by snow-leopards, one can usually count on finding them pretty much in the same place as where one last saw them.

Accordingly next morning we made our way up a steep hill overlooking our little camp on the eastern side. This spur juts out from the main ridge which flanks the valley on that side, and I had come to the conclusion over night that from it I might obtain a good view up the glacier and also over the grassy slopes where the ibex had been seen. It was a very steep climb, but no really bad places impeded us. Near the top, where there was quite a thick belt of birch jungle, we saw many tracks of musk-deer, and came upon the remains of one of these animals killed by a snow-leopard some days previously.

It did not take long to find the ibex, though they had moved a little and were farther away from our post of observation than they had been the day before, having crossed a big nullah, which in these pages I shall refer to as the White Nullah, as its precipitous sides glistened in the sun almost like chalk cliffs. But to see your ibex is one thing, and to get him is another. The day before, when first seen, they had been grazing on the grass slopes on the near side of the White Nullah; now they had taken up a strong strategic position on the far side of it, with sentries so skilfully posted all around that to stalk them as long as they were in that position was impossible.

A frontal attack upon them was quite out of the question, for between myself and the ibex bare grass

slope intervened, which must be crossed before I could get within shooting distance. Similarly, an attack from below was not to be thought of, for the wind was blowing uphill, and I would far rather risk an ibex seeing me than his scenting me, his power of scent being (as far as my experience goes) far more acute than his eyesight. How any outside scent ever reaches the nostrils of an ibex through the strong and unpleasant aroma of pure undiluted goat which pervades the air around his person, I do not know; but certain it is that a stray puff of wind tainted with the scent of man is enough to put a herd of ibex to flight from a very long way off.

But to return to those particular twenty-nine ibex. To attack them from in front was no good, to attack them from below was no good, so there only remained the possibilities of a stalk from above to be considered. Finally, I discarded this too as impossible, for, although I could, by making a long detour, get closer than I was at present, I could not get within about four hundred yards of them. However, the day was yet young, and there was every hope that they might descend into the broad bottom of the White Nullah, where there was both grass and water, and so give me an excellent chance of a stalk from where I then sat. Accordingly, I decided that I must remain still where I was, awaiting my chance, and seize it when it was offered.

Fickle fortune, however, was not to favour us that day, for about three o'clock a female ibex suddenly appeared, as if she had dropped from the skies, on the grass slopes between us and the nullah, and was soon joined by eight other animals of whom one was a young buck. They grazed towards us and eventually came well within shot, but at the same time entirely spoiled an admirable chance of stalking the big herd

who in the evening descended to feed off the grass in the moist bottom of the White Nullah. The young buck and his eight little wives entirely barred the way, and we dare not advance for fear of scaring them and alarming the others too. So after waiting till evening on the chance of the big herd joining the small ones and thus giving us a chance, we returned to camp, bamboozled for the time being, but fully determined to outwit the ibex which we had by now seen had several good heads amongst them.

Next day we climbed up to our former point of vantage and were glad to see no signs of the small ibex —the obstructionists of the day before. The big herd were still on the far side of the nullah; but I at once saw that if they settled down in the place where they then stood, it would not be by any means impossible to stalk them, as they were lower down than when we had last seen them, so that the folds of the ground and the edge of the nullah itself would afford some cover for a stalk. When the sun began to get hot the big ibex lay down under rocks and bushes, but for a long while the herd seemed restless, getting up and lying down again, and often gazing intently in our direction, though I felt sure they could not have seen us. However, they finally settled down for their siesta, leaving a single animal as sentry whilst most of the others went to sleep or lazily chewed the cud. My shikari and I had marked down two animals with fine heads, one of which lay down under some bushes and a big rock well above the rest of the herd.

When we began our stalk the single ibex was still sitting on a rock doing sentry, but fortunately turned away from us. Leaving the tiffin-coolie behind, Dost Mahomed and I slithered down the hill-side on our backs very slowly, keeping an eye on the ibex sentry, who

Head of the Nullah,—Ibex ground.

presently became hidden from us as we got lower down. Then all went well for a bit and we found, as I had expected, that the undulations of the ground gave us good cover; but when we had arrived almost within stalking distance, we came to a steep, rocky corner round which we had to make our way in order to get any nearer and within sight of the ibex. Here the single small ibex had us in view again as we rounded the corner, but as he was still turned away from us and was gazing intently down hill, we decided that we had better get round the corner as quickly as possible, before any of the other ibex changed their positions.

The rock corner was rather bad ground, not really difficult, but precipitous for twenty or thirty feet, so that one had to clamber down using hands and feet. I told the shikari to take my rifle and glasses, and watch the ibex as I went down, and then to let them down to me on a rope before following himself. When I had got about halfway down and some paces round the corner, an unfamiliar noise from below me caused me to glance down over my shoulder. I was just in time to see one snow-leopard jump off a ledge of rock below me, whilst another—the male animal—still stood glaring at me and working his jaws in that same quivering manner as a cat sometimes does when intent upon a bird; a second later, and he too jumped down and disappeared.

They had not been more than twenty yards from me, but although I did not take long to scramble down and get my rifle from Dost Mahomed, they were both out of sight by the time I had done so. As the shikari and I lay there looking after the leopards we heard a shrill whistle of alarm from the ibex, who had seen either the leopards or ourselves, or both. From the place where the leopards had been lying we could see the

ibex who, on hearing the alarm whistle, at once "bunched" round the animal who had given the warning. For a moment they stood there looking in our direction and then moved off diagonally up hill, at first in a bunch and then stringing out into single file. The one big ibex, which had been lying down alone above the rest, and which we had marked down as being a good head, stood on the far edge of the nullah for a moment, looking back after the others had begun to make off.

It was a long shot, longer than I care about taking, but he showed up well and I decided to risk it. In this case fortune favoured the brave, for my bullet sped true, and a few minutes later I was passing the tape over his horns. The head was symmetrical and beautifully curved, measuring forty-six inches in length, and twenty-six from tip to tip. I could not grumble, but mankind is naturally discontented, I fear, and I could not help saying to Dost Mahomed, I would rather have had one of the snow-leopards. Later on I did get a snow-leopard, and although he was certainly neither of the two we saw the day I shot the ibex, his skin on the wall of my room near the head of the ibex recalls to me the events of the day on which I saw my first snow-leopard.

I have been fortunate enough to see a good number of these animals since, and have, I fear, expended a good deal of bad language upon them when time and again they have spoiled a stalk by disturbing game which I was after. I have on more than one occasion been lucky enough to see snow-leopards actually in pursuit of their quarry, which is as pretty a sight as a man could wish to see—provided his quarry and the leopards' are not one and the same animal. At first I thought that, like the cheetah or hunting leopard, *felis uncia* probably made a spring

and a short rush, after which, if he were unsuccessful, he gave up the chase. But it seems that this is not always the case, for I have twice seen snow-leopards have a long chase after ibex. One followed two ibex, bounding along behind them for a good three hundred yards until he lost them in bad ground where he could not follow; the other case was still more interesting, and was perhaps exceptional rather than the general rule.

I was watching a herd of ibex with a telescope across a broad valley. I had only arrived in camp that evening and the ibex were too high up and too far away for me to go after them that night, so I had gone up to a ridge above my camp whence my shikari was able to show them to me through the telescope. We were watching them to see where they settled down for the night, so as to be able to start straight off after them in the early morning. The herd — which consisted of some twenty animals of both sexes — was grazing on one of those steep grass slopes which a hillman calls "maidan" (flat, plain), although they are mostly as steep as the side of a house and make us sahib-log get very out of breath when we go up them. Well, the ibex were grazing on this grass slope, which I daresay they too called "maidan." Above them was deep snow and rocky crags, whereas beneath them the lower edge of the maidan fell away in narrow steep-sided nullahs, divided by equally narrow and precipitous ridges on which grew a good number of juniper bushes. Suddenly there was a commotion amongst the ibex, and a second later they were going round and round, like horses in a circus ring, with a snow-leopard right amongst them.

I fully expected them to rush off at once to the safety of some little precipice below, but to my astonish-

ment they kept strictly to the maidan and, on it, seemed to have the legs of the snow-leopard. I soon noticed one other fact too, namely, that the does and immature animals were separated from the rest of the herd, either of their own accord, or else by design of the snow-leopard, who paid no attention to them and devoted all his energies to trying to catch one of the full-grown males.[1] The former, after the first rush, collected into a little bunch higher up at the top of the maidan, whilst the snow-leopard chivied their relatives of the sterner sex backwards and forwards, this way and that, until both pursuer and pursued came to a standstill through sheer exhaustion as far as I could make out. This took quite a long while. I did not time it, but it seemed to be about half an hour and was, I daresay, really half as much, or possibly twenty minutes. All the while the ibex made no attempt to leave the maidan; and when the snow-leopard, apparently tired and disgusted at his ill-success, disappeared as mysteriously as he had come, they still stood quite still looking in the direction in which he had gone; and thus we left them at dusk.

I have seen other snow-leopards at various times, but a glance at the skin on my wall reminds me of the two first I ever saw, rather than any other; and the ibex head near it is there to comfort me for missing such a chance of a right and left at snow-leopards, as if saying: "An ibex in the hand is worth two snow-leopards in the bush, any day!"

[1] The females and young are much lighter and more active, especially if there is snow, into which the heavy bucks sink deep and soon tire. It is for this reason, I believe, that so many *Ovis Poli* rams are killed by wolves on the Pamirs.

CHAPTER XXIII

A DAY ON A KASHMIR TROUT STREAM

SQUARK! squark! It was the loud, unmusical voice of a startled heron; but harsh and unmusical as it was in itself, it sent a thrill of pleasure running through me, for everything with which that sound was connected in my mind was as happy and as beautiful as the sound was ugly and melancholy. In a moment of time it wafted my spirit away many hundreds of miles, over burning, dusty plains, through forests redolent of pines damped by showers of rain and warmed by hot sun, along steep and winding mountain roads overhanging a mighty rushing river, and finally set me down in that spot to which the heron's cry, the kingfisher's shrill twitterings as he poises over his prey, or the plop of a lusty trout spirits me away wheresoever I may happen to be.

To live those days over again is ever a joy to me, and as a joy unshared is but half a joy, let me try at least to share the memory of it with you, and if you are the kind, sympathetic reader that I hope you are, you may, even through the medium of pen and ink wielded by my poor fingers, perhaps understand why the cry of the heron is such sweet music in my ears.

May I ask you, kind reader, to picture to yourself an old walled-in garden, bright with masses of tall cosmos, delicate tinted peaches, golden pears and rosy apples, and shady with magnificent chenar trees and stately poplars? The whole is warmed by a brilliant

September sun, and cooled by clear running water and deep still tanks. These chenars and tanks, combined with the remains of massive grey stonework, are in themselves almost sufficient to tell us that we are standing in one of the beautiful gardens laid out by the Moghuls around some favourite summer "retreat."

At the back is a sloping hill-side ending abruptly in dark rock cliffs, which form as it were one of the walls of the garden, and at the base of which a large volume of water comes welling up in deep cool springs. No baby trickles these, needing the assistance of tributary streams to enable them to rise from the status of a puny rivulet to that of a full-grown stream, but deep pools of ice-cold water, capable of forming at once a stream of no mean dimensions; and they come boiling up with a sound like gurgling laughter, as if rejoicing at their escape from the bowels of the mountain which imprisoned them so long. Such is the Achabal stream at its birth! Perhaps one should say rebirth, for it is quite possible that this is nothing but the vanished Bringhi stream born again. This latter, rising in the high uplands towards Rajparan, comes rushing and roaring over rocks and boulders, a typical mountain torrent for the greater part of its length. Then it issues into a wide and open valley, having gathered to it the waters of Nowboog and other valleys on the way; but instead of continuing to increase in size as it proceeds, like any ordinary well-behaved stream, it gradually commences to decrease in volume. Certainly much water is at times taken for irrigation purposes, but not sufficient to account for the Bringhi dwindling as it does. Indeed, if one follows it down far enough one will find that it entirely disappears into the earth, to be rejuvenated at Achabal! At least so say the Kashmiris, and perhaps rightly; for this much is certain, that if heavy rain falls

over the hills whence the Bringhi draws its waters, then, even though there has been no rain at Achabal and no drainage from the rice-fields, the uppermost waters of the Achabal will show a certain amount of discoloration.

Be this as it may, let us follow the infant waters of the Achabal and see what manner of river it is that we have to deal with. At first the waters of the springs are carefully fostered, being led off in several channels, some natural and some artificial or partly so. One fairly large natural branch flows away outside the actual garden, forming at a bend a big deep pool such as might hold a fish of any size. Here, too, grand old chenars spread their giant limbs out over the water, and on a semi-submerged island on the far side a weeping-willow forms a shady lurking-place for fish, and a choice perch for a couple of bright-coloured kingfishers. Sometimes they dive straight down from their willow perch, sometimes they hover over the water a while, uttering shrill little cries before the tell-tale plop informs one that there is probably one fish less in the river; and one hopes and prays it is not a troutlet! From the deep pool the water flows off into an inviting "stickle," quite deep enough at one side to hold a good trout, and then dives under a narrow bridge of no great merit or beauty; but quite famous since a seven-pound trout was pulled out from underneath it. Other waters are led off through the garden in masonry ducts to fill the tanks and supply the fountain in whose grateful spray those old Moghuls delighted. Thence, flowing out of the tanks, the sparkling crystal water passes under a grey stone archway, through an avenue of poplars, and thus leaves its nursery and is launched forth into the world to take care of itself as the Achabal stream.

As a rule, about the middle of September there is a

good fall of rain and a sprinkling of snow on the hill-tops, but this particular year there had been no rain, so that the springs and rivulets on the hill-sides were dry, and the chukor, instead of being down along the edge of the cultivation and the skirts of the hills, were for lack of water still up on the hill-tops, where they might feed on grass seeds and "bhart" berries, and obtain drink from some little snow-fed spring that still held out against the drought. The Achabal stream, too, was almost at winter level, running very low and as clear as gin. Day after day there had been a cloudless sky and brilliant sun, most excellent things in their way, but not altogether conducive to the catching of trout. So, after several days' trial of small flies and fine tackle throughout the day, I had come to the conclusion that morning and evening were the only times when I might reasonably hope to catch fish. Thus I had planned overnight to fish the upper waters in the morning, leaving that grand stretch of lower water which lies between Sansuma village and the junction of the Arpat stream until evening.

So next morning, after a chota hazri of tea and fruit, I sally forth as the kali koel pipes his morning hymn in the cool dawn. The light rod in my hand seems to tremble with keen hope and expectation, and the two flies upon which I pin my faith, a medium-sized "Sir Richard," and another of my own fancy, look as though they must invite the attention of any hungry trout that sees them. It is full early yet, and the slanting rays of the rising sun have not yet caressed the mist-veiled waters with their morning kiss; so I make for the pool which is formed by the first bend of the river after it emerges from the garden and village into the fields beyond. It is as likely a pool as one could wish to see, but one that always disappoints me; and perhaps

"Through an avenue of poplars."

The Achabal stream.

it is this very ill success in the past which induces me to give it another trial before passing on down to the lower pools where I have old friends to deal with, fish which I have seen before and maybe even hooked and lost. Once more this first pool fails to justify its appearance, and my hopes, for it yields nothing but a couple of small "choosh,"[1] who take the "Sir Richard" readily enough, but give but little sport in the landing. As I leave the place and walk on down the bank, a heron fishing in the shallows flaps lazily away with a loud squark! squark! indignant at being disturbed.

Now intervenes a considerable stretch of unfishable water, the river running broad and shallow, and, in its present state, affording no prospects of success; though a quantity of doves seem to find it an admirable spot for their morning drink, and a couple of black and white pied kingfishers seem to be obtaining their breakfast of small fry without difficulty. Farther down, a single snipe goes off from a little patch of bog with a tell tale cry, that unmistakable pénch! pénch! which for the moment makes me wish to exchange the rod in my hand for a gun.

Now I arrive at a point where the river once more becomes interesting from a fisherman's point of view, and two plans of campaign lay open to me. A small branch stream here joins the river from the right, and I know that "The Gutter," as this branch is usually called, holds at least one fish; for did I not hook and lose him a few days ago? So I may either follow the main stream down, and take the Gutter on the way back, or make straight for the willow tree on the bank of the Gutter, under which our old friend lies. No! let us leave him until last, for the strip of water in which he

[1] Choosh. This fish and the "Chiru" are the two commonest of the "native" fish in Kashmir.

lies is cool and dark, and overshadowed by many trees, so that it will remain in the shade long after the sun's rays begin to play upon the more open pools of the main stream. So I wade across the stream, fishing down a nice little run under an overhanging willow before landing on the far bank, but without success. The bank upon which I now stand soon rises, forming a cliff in some places as much as ten feet high, upon which grow tufts of long grass, broad-leaved docks and sweet-scented balsams, forming a narrow fringe of shade where the water runs deep under the cliff. This run may be most conveniently fished from the top of the cliff, whence the fly may be worked in under each overhanging bush and tuft of grass; but it must be approached warily, and fished lying down or kneeling low, for the flies must be kept in view, to prevent getting hung up in the bushes, and yet the fisherman must keep out of sight as much as possible; for the Achabal trout are no fools. Crawling along the bank and using as long a line as I can from that position, I am now just able to let my cast come across with the stream, and work it in under a big clump of balsams and a small bramble which hangs right out over the water. It is ten to one I get caught in that bramble, but still—Faint heart never won fair lady, and I must reach that spot. I can see the second fly just skimming the top of the water, perilously near the longest of the bramble branches, which all but touches the water. Plop! splash! and a nice trout comes at it. I strike lightly and catch — the bramble! The fish is not pricked, but there is my cast firmly held by that wretched branch, and nothing short of going down there and untangling it will free it! So I clamber down, taking care not to trample down the balsams which invite fish to live in their friendly shade, and

recover the flies. At the same time I think I may as well cut at least a few inches off that bramble branch, so that it may not be quite so dangerous in future. Of course this undertaking has driven away all hope of moving the fish again at present, but there is still a nice bit of water left, before the pool tails off into a stickle. So I smoke a pipe and give the fish time to settle down again, and my own ruffled feelings to calm a little; and then set to work once more.

I try the pool right down again, but the fish under the bramble is not back yet, and indeed, could scarcely be expected to be so. Near the tail of the run is a submerged stump, behind which the water eddies in a miniature whirlpool and backwater. It is again a dangerous spot but a most likely one; one of those places which are always tenanted by a trout of sorts, no matter how many a previous tenant has been evicted. Sure enough up comes a fish and is hooked. Twice in as many seconds he is clear out of the water, giving two regular buck jumps on the very spot where he was hooked, and then the reel gives one short scream and he is off, having wound the cast tightly round the stump! I look somewhat ruefully at the eighteen inches of gut which is all that is left after the tug o' war with the stump is over, but whilst replacing it with another, console myself with the thought that the fish, which was not much more than the necessary fourteen inches, will now live to grow bigger. No! A lost fish is not *always* a large one!

The next pool, but a few yards lower down, is as good as any on the river, and affords to a trout almost any description of water he may fancy to lie in. At the head of the pool the water falls rapidly into it in a deep fast run between a little island and the bank, flowing on fairly deep and swift under a high cliff-like

bank of earth, but forming a still deep backwater behind the island, shaded by the willows on the other bank. At the lower end the bank I am on recedes, and becomes a low grass slope; and the water opens out into broad quiet depths with plenty of overhanging trees on the far side. It is to this place that big fish, if they do not elect to run up into the shallows in search of fry, drop down in the evening to feed; and here the dry-fly fisherman may occasionally find a fish rising persistently and get his chance. Indeed there are many spots on this Achabal stream which remind us of a Hampshire chalk stream and offer possibilities of success with the dry fly, but it is not often that a fish is found steadily rising in one place as an Itchen trout does, lying near the surface and sucking down each nymph or dun that sails past him. At the second cast near the head of the pool a fish is risen just where the edge of the run ripples the backwater. Here there are no obstacles, and after a plucky fight he is in the net and the next moment shining silver on the bank. Full fourteen inches he measures, and is a beautifully conditioned fish; very deep and thickset with a small head and of a light silvery appearance with big red spots; but the day is yet young and one may hope for something better, so he is carefully returned to become a bigger and a wiser fish.

Down at the end of the run and right under the bank I get a tug under water at the Sir Richard, just the slightest tug in the world, as if something took a shy nibble at the feathers; so I give that something a rest whilst eating a luscious pear which I have brought out for refreshment in such moments and then I try him again. I know the exact spot, and the fish this time more boldly takes Sir Richard at the first cast. Off he dashes, making the reel sing merrily, away into

the still lower water ; and I feel sure I am into something good. Arrived at the end of his first rush he changes his tactics and jumps clear out of the water several times, making my heart jump too with apprehension. Three pounds, if an ounce, and still on! is the thought that comes to me as he stops his antics and makes a circuit of the pool in a more dignified manner. Now he darts off up to the rapid water again, and then suddenly, apparently without reason, the fly comes back to me and he is off! One's feelings in such moments can scarcely be described, and may only be summed up briefly as something between a wish to swear and a desire to cry, in which perhaps the latter predominates. A pied kingfisher flying past with a little silver fish in his beak as much as to say, I can catch fish if you can't, does not console me; but it fills me with a determination to emulate his piscatorial achievements.

The sun is now well above the eastern hills, and will be shedding his light in a delicate pattern of golden filigree work through the trees that shade the Gutter, in which there still remains that trout to be dealt with. He is not easy to get at, for the Gutter is no more than a couple of yards wide, and the trees make casting difficult. This particular fish lies in a deep hole where the stream eddies in with a quiet swirl under the roots of the willow tree round which he broke me last time almost as soon as hooked. On this occasion I determine to alter my tactics somewhat, and make up my mind that, if the fish is risen and hooked, it must be for the first minute or two a case of "Pull devil pull baker" and trust to luck and a sound cast. So I cross the Gutter on to the same bank as that on which the willow tree grows, and stalk him from tree trunk to tree trunk, until I am in position behind the

tree next above that under which the trout lies. Then using a short line the fly is flicked out into the stream with a low backhand cast, and worked down the current past the lurking-place. Nothing happens: either he is no longer there or he won't come out to take Sir Richard. So the line is cautiously taken in, and another attempt made. I have now measured the distance pretty accurately, and the next backhand flick sends the fly so that it strikes the bole of the tree lightly, and drops into the water close to where there is a small whirlpool under the roots. There is a grab in the middle of the whirlpool and I have him fast: now begins the tug o' war! It is unceremonious perhaps, but the trout is dragged over the water away from his refuge in a manner that so surprises and disconcerts him, that I am now able to coax him up stream sufficiently to allow me to cross by a little ford to the other side whence I can command him better. Brave efforts on his part, which have to be met with stern determination on mine, several times take him perilously near his old haunt, but luck favours me, and the utmost strain that I dare put upon rod and gut suffices to check him in time, and before long a spotted beauty of 2 lbs. exactly is gasping on the bank; and not very much later the firm pink flesh is frizzling in the pan for the breakfast which I feel I have earned so well.

The early evening finds me near that pretty bit of water, where the river winds round Sansuma village with many a sinuous curve. It is here that one may attempt to lure two veritable leviathans, well known to those who have had dealings with them as the "Boiler" and the "Bulger"; monsters who have learned caution in their youth, and, like other old birds, refuse to be caught with chaff—or anything else. "How big are

they" did you say? That is a question I dare not answer for fear of being disbelieved! Neither the Boiler under his willow tree, nor the Bulger in the shade of the nut bushes, shows any signs of life, so I move on down to the junction pool just by the village, where a good "chiru" is landed, a fish that rises boldly and makes a better fight for freedom than his cousin the "choosh." Fishing on down below Sansuma, two small trout are taken and returned after a plucky fight, one being twelve inches, and the other just over fourteen; but both in perfect condition, and weighing probably more than might be expected for their length.

As the sun dips below the distant Pir Punjal, and the doves come flocking down for their evening drink, I change my flies to a "coachman," and a most tempting looking silver and white Hardy's lure. Fishing back up the stream these add another small trout, a chiru, and a couple of choosh to the total before reaching Sansuma bridge, where the narrowing waters shoot under the bridge and expand again into a broad deep pool, slow flowing, and silent at its lower end. Here there is work to be done. Yes! the fish I saw two nights ago is again quietly but steadily rising in the same place near the right bank in the smooth water. Crawling on to the bridge and crouching there, I try him with all the skill I can master; but except for a slight ripple when he seemed to take a look at the coachman, I am no nearer catching him than I was the day before yesterday. He even seems to be suspicious and stops rising for a while, but after a short pause shows again, as he sucks down some ephemeral dainty. There is only one thing to be done, and there is just enough light from the sunset glow to do it. Crawling off the bridge, I move cautiously down the bank to a spot below the rising fish. Here the cast I have been using

is removed, and a very fine one, that I have all ready for this very occasion, is put on in its place. At the end of it is a small silver sedge, which is as like the flies seen on the water on previous evenings as anything I have got. It is nearly dark now, but the pale twinkling stars in the east, and the deep orange glow that still tints the western horizon and shows up the mountains in rugged outline, gives sufficient light to see the little white fly I am going to use as it comes floating down the stream. Measuring the distance at a glance, I cast just above where the fish last rose, but I have underestimated the distance; and the little white fly floats down wide of him and unnoticed. Swish! swish! sings the line above my head, the bats flutter round the waving rod, and with a little more line out, the fly once more alights upon the water, straight above where the trout has just moved. But the line unfortunately lies just across a small bunch of floating weeds, which—bad luck to 'em!—make it drag, and sink my little voyager. Will it have put him down? It certainly would do so in the daytime; but no, there he is again! and once more the carefully dried sedge is put over him, and—he has it! With quite a gentle suck he took it, a gentle kiss that makes the calm face of the waters dimple at the caress; but now when hooked there is no gentleness in his behaviour. Out he comes with a jump, looking a regular monster in the gloaming, and then goes off up the pool like a flash. It is now my turn to be gentle, for it is the finest of fine casts that I am using; and yet I must be firm, and see that he does not reach the bridge. In the fast deep water he sulks for a while, but a little extra pressure moves him, and he comes tearing down the stream again, almost to the place where he was hooked. Here he bores down a bit, and I can feel him shaking his head and jagging the

line with savage and alarming jerks. Failing to effect his freedom in this manner, he turns his attention to a patch of reeds growing in the water just above where I stand, and gives me considerable trouble to keep him out of them. Now he seems tiring a little, for I can from time to time see his back rolling out of the water in porpoise-like fashion; so I gather him in gently towards me. But he has plenty of fight in him yet, and it is another good five minutes before the sharp-eyed Kashmiri boy passes the net under him, and hoists him ashore in the gathering darkness.

3¼ lbs. does he prove to be, and, although I am very wet, and it is a long walk home in the dark, the chirp of the crickets, the croaking of frogs, and even the harsh cry of a heron all sound to-night as the sweetest music in my ears; and when a startled plover flaps off with shrill cries of "did 'e do it! did 'e do it!" I can answer truthfully and joyfully, "I have done it!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CALL OF THE CHUKOR

It was the cold weather in one of the military stations of northern India, a busy time when one's mind was fully occupied with thoughts of drill and training, generals' inspections and manœuvres, and other such mundane facts which loomed large in the foreground of the present.

But an incident, small, commonplace and unimportant in itself, was nevertheless sufficient to momentarily blot out that present, and make general officers, colonels, training schemes, promotion exams *et hoc genus omne* quit abruptly the stage upon which but a moment before they had all been playing such important parts. And all because a native happened to go by carrying one poor little captive bird in a wicker cage.

Chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck, cha-chuck, cha-chuck, cha-chuck, cha-chuck! called out the little chukor, noisily and cheerily even in captivity; and it was his voice that dispelled so instantaneously the present and conjured up the past. The scene changed: the native with his cage and the well-kept road on which he walked, the strains of a band playing at the club, the orderly hastening down the road with a file of papers, these and all that went to make up the present vanished before my eyes, and only the call of the chukor, growing fainter and fainter in the distance, remained with my spirit as it sped upon its journey.

At first it hovered as if uncertain where to go,

visiting for a moment the spot on the green shrub-covered flanks of the Murree Hills, where I shot and lost my first chukor. Yes, there, clear and distinct, is that bush of "sannatta" by which I saw him drop, apparently like a stone, and there, too, are the coolies and the local shikari to whom I offered such fabulous rewards if they would only find that runner, my first chukor.

Then suddenly the scene changes, not once, but again and again. Now it is the rocky hills behind Chakdara, overlooking the valley of the winding Swat River, still fertile with rich rice crops, though the Buddhist cities with their beautifully carved semi-Grecian temples are no longer there, having given place to the sons of the Prophet who know not the gentle faith, but wage a series of little wars with each other, for the easing of their own passions and the entertainment of the political and military officers who happen to be in their country. Now it is the low rugged hills which look down upon the Margalla Pass to-day just as they did when the great Alexander marched through the pass from Taxila,[1] and when John Nicholson added fresh laurels to those he had already earned by his exploits there in the early days of the Mutiny.

Here there are two birds, two particular driven birds, that I now see again as distinctly as on the day when I first saw them. One, slightly ahead of the other, is a seesee,[2] skimming low round the curves of the hill-side below me, with small, fast-beating wings, that seem to tinkle as they beat the air in rapid flight; the second is a chukor coming high overhead from the ridge in front of me, but sharply outlined against the

[1] Taxila. The remains of this once famous town are near the small railway station of Kala Ki Serai, between Rawulpindi and Peshawur.

[2] Seesee, *Ammoperdix bonhami;* the small sand partridge of Northern India.

clear, cold-weather sky; whereas the little seesee on my left tones almost exactly with the yellow-grey rocks and sand which form for him a background. I have just time to mark the seesee crumple up and bump along the ground in front of me, before turning once more in my day-dream of the past, just as I turned on that memorable day, to take the chukor before he gets too far behind over my right shoulder; and as he, too, crumples up I once more hear a voice shouting "Shabash!" the voice of one with whom many a happy day was spent shooting, one whose cheery "shabash"[1] is no longer to be heard in reality, for he has now passed on to the happy hunting-grounds.

And so the memories come crowding up, some softened by the dreamy mist of the past, others as clear-cut and sharp as the day they occurred, all conjured up by the clucking of that captive bird; until at last the Utopia of the chukor-shooter is once more before my eyes—the land where the pursuit of that grand bird is to be enjoyed under the most perfect conditions that the heart of man can desire.

The world that I see in the vision of the past is cold and dry and frost-bound. It is early morning of Christmas Eve in the little frontier outpost of Gilgit, and the day is as cheery and bright as the season to which it belongs. True, that side of the valley along which our cavalcade is making its way at a smart trot is all in shadow, for the sun only shines on Gilgit itself for about four hours during the day at this time of the year, but the far side of the valley is all in bright sunlight, and the surrounding mountains sparkle dazzling white against a turquoise blue sky. The party on sport intent consists of the British officers of the Agency, the old Dogra general commanding the garrison, and many

[1] Shabash! Well done!

of the local nobility, who have come in to pay their respects to the Political Agent.

They form quite an imposing and not uninteresting cavalcade as they clatter along after the big, fast-trotting mare which the Political Agent bestrides, their sturdy little Badakshani ponies making the ice-bound earth ring like iron beneath their trampling feet. The gay trappings, the silver-studded harness for which Badakshan is also famous, the embroidered chogas flying loose in the wind, the snorting of the ponies, which sends forth a steam-like cloud into the cold, frosty air, and the ringing of hoofs, all tell the chukor that something unusual is afoot, and brings forth a volume of indignant cluckings from the hill-side above the road.

Here and there, high up, men may be seen perched like vultures upon rocks, forming a rough line well above the chukor. These are the stops, who have turned out and taken up their places early in the morning before the birds have begun to go up from the feeding grounds below.

Soon the meeting-place, the bridge over the stream at the mouth of the great Kirgah nullah, is reached. Here the other guns are already arrived, and orderlies and syces with guns, cartridges, and blankets for the steaming horses stand waiting. Near this group of retainers, in a little party by themselves, stand some people of Basin village, who greet us in their soft Persian, and with them an old and venerable chief, who, in his thick quilted coat, looks not unlike the hawk that sits on his wrist, with all its feathers fluffed up shivering in the cold.

I can still feel the glow of enthusiasm and keen enjoyment that I then experienced; one's body glowing with warmth from the ride, finger-tips tingling with the

crisp cold, and eyes watering from the cold wind blowing in one's face, and, above all, heart beating fast with the hopes and expectations of good sport to which the clucking of the birds has given rise. Once more with these feelings of keen anticipation I draw the number three on a little slip of paper from some one's hat, by which I know that I am to occupy number three butt for the first drive. And now the slips of paper are all drawn, and the guns depart to take up their positions with many a parting jest, such as, "Mind you take your first two barrels well in front of you," or, "Let just a few go by so as to give me a chance at something behind you!"

The butt I occupy is one which fills me with mixed feelings, partly of hope and partly of dismay, for it is a place in which one is sure to get plenty of shooting, but not necessarily equally sure of killing very many birds. It is just at the mouth of the narrow gorge where the Kirgah nullah opens out into the Gilgit valley. In my immediate front is the stream rushing down to join the Gilgit River some distance away to the left. Beyond it is broken, stony ground running up to the cliffs which form the edge of the nullah where the high bluff between the Naupur and Kirgah nullahs ends abruptly. Upon the face of this bluff I can just see Yathini gazing down on our proceedings with Sphinx-like smile, and beyond and below her, on the alluvial plain, are the ruins of the old fort where years ago the ruler of Yasin cut to pieces a Kashmir garrison.

Close at hand, and to my right front, Kirgah gorge ends in more high cliffs, beyond which I can just see a little way up the dark and sombre gorge itself, and it is this that causes the feelings of dismay. Some birds will doubtless come straight across from the other side of the nullah to these cliffs, giving high, but otherwise easy, shots; however, the majority of chukor may be expected

KIRGAH AND NAUPUR NULLAHS.

to come out of the dark depths of the Kirgah nullah, up which there are two guns to hasten their movements before they come to me, and, from what I know of chukor, they will all hug the cliffs so that I shall not see them until they are almost on top of me; moreover, they will all skim round that corner on the curve the whole time, with wings outstretched but going a tremendous pace, so that they look like tin discs whizzing through the air seen edgewise. The one saving clause is, that though I can see nothing round that corner formed by those cliffs, I am sure to hear pop! pop! from the two guns up the nullah when any birds are coming down it.

On top of the cliffs too there is another gun, a local chief who has been sent up there to get what he can out of such birds as may try and settle there; but as I have more faith in his zeal than in his discretion, I have told him that the forward edge of the cliffs is much the best place for him: thence he can shoot down upon number two butt, the occupant of which is a smaller man than myself, and therefore, according to my argument, likely to catch fewer pellets than I am.

My little Gurkha orderly is beside me in the butt, and the two or three local men I have with me to pick up birds are ensconced in suitable places behind rocks; soon the rattle of a native tom-tom disturbs the stillness, and the drive has begun. There is a shout from some stops on the far side of the nullah, and a single bird, which they have evidently been watching amongst the rocks, comes sailing across straight towards me. I endeavour to follow the good advice that has been offered to me, by giving him the first barrel whilst he is still well in front of me, and miss him clean, but manage to make up for the miss by bringing him down with my left as he passes me.

So far so good. For a short while nothing happens,

and then bang! bang! and again bang! bang! from round the corner of the nullah, showing that the two guns there have had four barrels at something. There is scarcely time to wonder whether they have hit or missed, when four chukor come whizzing round that corner—just as I knew they would—going a terrific pace, and very difficult to see against the background of rocks, so much the same in tone as their own little brown bodies. Bang! as soon as I can get my gun up to the shoulders, but nothing happens; bang! again in desperation as they disappear behind me; but once more no result, except that the chukor seem to give a flick of their tails as if in derision. Whilst I am still foolishly looking after them, and hoping that one of the guns in the second line may take toll of them for their impertinence, Nain Singhs warning "āgya" (they've come) reminds me that my gun is empty; and long before I can slip even one cartridge into the breech, a big covey comes swinging round the corner, some of the outer ones offering apparently easy shots as they pass directly overhead.

For a while comparative silence reigns, soon to be broken by the shouts of the stops on the far side of the nullah, who wave their garments above their heads and throw handfuls of sand in the air to turn the birds in our direction. A good covey comes sailing across, but passes wide on my right and endeavours to settle on the top of the cliff, whence an explosion tells me that our local celebrity has taken toll of them, and I wonder how the occupant of number two butt likes it. However, it suits me very well, for the startled chukor shoot out like a scattered flight of rockets so as to enable me to get a right and left out of them. Some more birds from across the nullah give me some lovely high shots and a couple more to the bag; and so the fun goes on.

The big coveys are all past now, but there are still plenty of birds which come singly or in twos and threes, kicked up from amongst the rocks by the advancing beaters. One settles about fifty yards in front of me, and I can just see his little head bobbing about among the rocks and stones as he runs here and there searching for a good place to hide. A moment later I know instinctively that my eye and his have met, and he knows at once that he is seen, and I too somehow feel instinctively that he knows it; a form of telepathy that is unfailing when eye meets eye. He is far too clever to rise at once, but scuttles away between the rocks until he is quite sure that he is well out of range, and then flits off up the nullah again to try some other line of escape. Next, without any warning, a bird comes low and fast round the corner. My orderly's sharp eyes spot him at once, but so difficult is he to see against the dark background that he whizzes past, skimming just over my head, before I see him, so upsetting my bodily and mental equilibrium that he is well out of shot behind me before I can get steady on my pins and turn round to fire at him.

At this juncture I have to deal gently but firmly with the retainer of the occupant of the next butt, a local levy acting as retriever, whose one idea is that his sahib's bag must be bigger than anyone else's, no matter where the birds come from. At present he holds the head and one of my men the legs of an unfortunate chukor which both claim for their respective sahibs, and have apparently made up their minds to settle the matter by having a tug-of-war with it. On the principle of peace at any price I tell the bird-snatcher to take it to his sahib with my compliments, and that I have four or five more birds which he can put on his game-stick too if it will give him any satisfaction.

After this one more bird is added to my total, an old and wily cock bird that I am just in time to see stealing quietly away down the nullah in front of me, flying low over the stream like a water-ousel, almost hidden by the bank. But unfortunately for him the bank has a break in it at one spot, which gives me my chance, and I drop him into the rushing water, whence he is retrieved by one of my men who has been placed there for just such an emergency.

That is the last shot of the beat, but not of the day; for there are several other drives which lie between us and the lunch that is awaiting us all in a certain hospitable house in Gilgit. To-day all the beats give someone sport, but no gun expects to get good shooting in every beat. Perhaps the best sport is that obtained from a big horseshoe cavity in the hill-side, out of which the birds rise in a swarm which reminds one of the grand finale of a firework display such as the French call a "bouquet"; and, indeed, the popping and banging of guns rivals a whole battery of squibs and crackers. A few chukor caught by the hawk, a pigeon and a fox, help to increase the total, which, spread out on the verandah before lunch, tots up to eighty-seven head; and who would ask for more from a morning's shooting?

CHAPTER XXV

SHOTS FROM A SHIKARA

I was on the Thames, dear old Father Thames; moreover I was in a punt, and having no claims to any nautical knowledge or ability, besides being on leave, and therefore having strong claims to be allowed to be lazy, I insisted on being the passenger rather than the crew of that punt. The accommodation for passengers was excellent, and I found the cushions most comfortable.

It was one of those glorious mellow September days when one sees England at her best. A threatening of thunder in the air made the atmosphere still and drowsy; the willow-trees drooping low over the water looked drowsy too, their leaves scarce stirring under the soft puffs of breeze that from time to time whispered among their branches. Small birds twittered fitfully amongst the reeds, and an energetic kingfisher shot past, going up-stream as if on urgent business; but even the energy of the kingfisher and the distant throbbing of a motor car far away on the highroad were insufficient to break the spell; whilst the gentle plash of paddles and the voice of the water rippling round the bows and down the sides of the punt in soothing caress aided and abetted in drugging me to sleep. Slowly the scene before me faded, growing dimmer and fainter until nought remained of the present but that soft rippling of water, which still sang soothingly in my ears, conjuring up visions of the past in the mists of sleep.

I am still upon the water, but in another land, a

land as fair in its own way as the hills whose feet are laved by Father Thames. The boat, too, was punt-like, but long and narrow, with sharp-pointed prow and stern; and the sinewy men who formed the crew plied paddles with heart-shaped blades. There were no cushions in the boat, nothing but a bundle of reeds and a blanket belonging to one of the men, and, what was better than many cushions, a gun and a goodly supply of cartridges.

There are other boats also on the edge of the Hokra Sar, as this sportsman's paradise is called; some twenty of them, in half of which other sahibs, familiar faces all, are to be seen putting together their guns, counting their boxes of cartridges, or rubbing their hands, chilled by the six-mile drive from Srinagar in the crisp morning air. As we wend our way, boat after boat, down a narrow channel cut in the dense reeds which surround the lake, prospects of sport are discussed, the boatmen tell of the vast number of duck shot by such and such a sahib from the very butt we have drawn, as much as to say, "If you don't shoot just as many, it's your fault, not ours"; dabchicks paddle about among the reeds, and a single snipe goes off along the edge of the jheel.

Emerging from the reeds into the more open water the ten guns separate, and each makes for the butt that he has drawn. As I bear away to the right, along with two or three other guns whose butts also lie in that direction, the paddlers increase their speed, plying longer strokes, which make little whirlpools gurgle past the sides of the boat as it slips through the water, and the lily pads dance merrily over the wavelets. Numbers of coots flutter away with much flapping of wings, as they drag their pattering feet over the surface of the water until they have gained sufficient impetus to rise. Some, indeed, seem to know they are safe for the present at

any rate, and scarcely rise at all, contenting themselves with skimming along, half running, half flying, to settle again with a rush and a splash a hundred yards or so to a flank. Some teal and white-eyed pochard, too, are disturbed, and make off towards the centre of the great lake, where they settle themselves, but spread alarm among a lot of geese, who circle around for a while with harsh cries. Everywhere birds are to be seen in the air, flying round and then settling again, as they think, in safety; but the majority of them—and they are there in their thousands—content themselves with quacking loud quacks of indignation at the beings who have dared to thus disturb the beautiful resting-place to which they have come after their long journey from the breeding-grounds to the far North beyond the great Himalaya.

And now my well-screened butt has been reached, and standing in it, with gun and cartridges ready and the pickers-up secreted somewhere behind, I have time before the first shot is fired to take in the beautiful view around me. If I turn round, I can just see through the tops of the reeds the snow-powdered peaks of the great southern barrier, the Pir Punjal and the Kaji Nag, with the low gap in it where the Jhelum finds an outlet at Baramula.

To my front for some distance is open water, in which I hope to drop my birds dead, and beyond it a thick belt of high reeds which hide from me the black throng of ducks and coots still paddling about and quacking spasmodically in the centre of the lake. On the left is the golden yellow line of tall poplar trees that mark the course of the main road; and following their direction the eye notes the misty haze of dust and smoke which hangs over the city of Srinagar and softens the reddish, dried-up slopes of the lower hills, just as the deepening

blue of the distance softens the giant mountains that rise behind, above all of which Nanga Parbat can just be seen raising its snow-white crest.

For the moment a great peacefulness prevails; small birds flit about and twitter amongst the rustling reeds, whence also comes the buzz of countless insects; bright gauze-winged dragon-flies dart hither and thither; a couple of kites circle about in keen anticipation of the meal off some dead teal or pochard which they feel sure awaits them; a pair of little grebes swim in and out among the reeds in front, their heads working to and fro in alert and jerky motion as they swim; and overhead a graceful, long-winged tern flits by. Suddenly there comes from the direction of number seven butt the sound of a gunshot; and all know that the occupant of this butt, which takes the longest to reach, has fired the signal that he is ready, and that the real work of the day has begun. For a second or two the stillness continues, and then two or three more shots are fired in quick succession from the opposite side of the jheel—an alarm signal which causes a general commotion.

There is a mighty noise, a rushing and a roaring, such as the backwash of a big wave makes upon a shingly beach, and from above the reed tops I see the duck rise from the open water in the centre of the lake in what can only be described as a black cloud. "Honk! honk! honk!" cry the geese; and amongst the ducks the duck mallard outcries all the rest of her tribe with her loud qua-a-ack, quack, quack. Now is the time to keep cool and hold straight.

At once the popping of guns becomes general all round the lake, and a big flock of white-eyed pochard come swooping across my front, and my two barrels bring down three of them with a splash into the open water in front of me. Quickly I reload, and manage

to get one teal out of a bunch that comes skimming low over the reeds in front. Some more birds of sorts take me by surprise by coming straight from behind me, with the consequence that I fire both barrels at them without result, and find myself with an empty gun in my hand as a fine lot of gadwall comes sailing over my head within easy shot.

And now the shooting waxes fast and furious. Backwards and forwards, from right to left, and from left to right; some flying straight and high, others swooping and curving low over the water, come the duck; this way and that, crossing and recrossing, until one is quite bewildered, and finds oneself firing impossible shots at birds really out of range, with the inevitable result that when an easy chance is offered a second later, one is fumbling with the cartridges whilst attempting to load and keep an eye on the approaching birds at the same time.

During that first bewildering rush of whirling, swishing, swooping birds one has all one can do to fire and load, but after a short while, though they still come thick and fast, one has a little more breathing space between the shots, and can recognise many of the various species of duck that are flighting around. Now it is a big pack of teal that approaches, looking almost black as they come skimming low and fast over the reeds in front. Good. They are coming straight over, but no—the gleam of the sun on my gun barrels or something puts them off, and they swerve suddenly, the light underparts of their wings and bodies shining silver in the sunlight as they turn. Next a flight of mallard comes along flying pretty high, for they have already been fired at. It is a long shot, but the metallic glint of greeny-blue on that old drake's head and neck settles it, and I let him have it. The outstretched head and

neck fold back between his widespread wings, and for a second the sun catches his beautiful white and chestnut breast as he crumples up and falls with a splash into the water on my left. Flock after flock of teal and white-eyed pochard fly past; the latter difficult to distinguish against the glare of the sun, but showing distinctly the white bars on their wings when they pass on the other side.

And now my attention is called to a big flock of duck passing him overhead; pintails and drakes every one of them, flying very high, and quite silent but for the "low, soft, hissing swish" of their powerful wings. Whilst watching them, some duck pass within easy shot on my right between me and the sun. I know well they are gadwalls by their low, oft-repeated chuckling quack, which sounds like ribald laughter to me as I miss them with both barrels. In the same manner a whistling cry, "whew! whew! whew!" and a sharp rustling, rather than a swish of wings, denotes the passage of a flock of widgeon in their close formation, though they are well out of range on my left. Many other ducks there are too that flash past unrecognised or half recognised, such as the old shoveller I dropped out of the rear ranks of a party of teal, some birds which look like crested pochards, and some others that may be those quaint little stiff-tail ducks which arrive in small numbers late in the autumn.

This sort of thing continues for perhaps half an hour, and though there are more misses than I care to record, there are nevertheless a goodly number of duck and teal lying around; not to mention a single, foolish old goose, who somehow got separated from his brethren and came sailing over my head in his endeavours to rejoin them. These geese are the first to leave the jheel, and are gradually followed by the big duck, until

the firing almost ceases, except for occasional shots at teal and pochard; a lull in the proceedings which I am very glad to have, in order to let my gun barrels cool down a bit. Big flights of mallard and gadwall still circle high overhead, so high as to be quite difficult to see; but in spite of the distance, their presence is betrayed by the whistling of their pinions as they cleave the air.

Soon, however, the shooting livens up again, for many of the birds try to return, and others, who have sought shelter in the reeds, are put out of them by the beaters; and so in fits and starts the shoot progresses, until it is time to finish off the cripples, and gather the birds before stopping for lunch.

Yes, not at all bad for the place I am in, I think, as I count them up: sixty-two, sixty-three, sixty——.

The scene changes. Once more I am in a boat, the same long, narrow type of boat as before, but on this occasion I sit at ease in a chair which has been firmly tied to the sides and low seat of the shikara. Only two other friends are with me, and each is seated in a similar boat, with a gun across his knees, and a well-filled cartridge bag beside him.

We glide forth under a low archway of old grey stonework, and thence into a broad stretch of placid stream which, with its reedy edges, yellow and white water-lilies, and willowy banks, recalls a shady backwater on the Thames. We have some way to go before reaching our shooting-ground, and our boatmen ply their paddles with long, sweeping strokes, which gradually grow shorter and shorter, quicker and quicker, until at last the headman in the bows of the boat taps the side with the handle of his paddle as a signal, and once more the time is changed back to the long, full

stroke. Soon the willow-shaded backwater is left behind, and we enter upon the Anchar Dal, a vast expanse of water-weeds and rushes, stretching from Srinagar right away to the confluence of the Jhelum and Sind Rivers; intersected, however, by numerous waterways cut through the tangled mass of waving rushes and matted surface weeds, which seems to extend as far as the eye can see to the foot of the surrounding hills.

Though no shady trees and green turf banks studded with irises are here to break the monotony of the immediate surroundings, the scene is still very beautiful with a beauty of its own, which is like, and yet, to me, quite distinct from that of the main river, or of the great Wular with its more open waters, or even of reed-girt Hokra: in my eyes, somehow, the Anchar has a spirit all its own. As in every view and in every season in the vale of Kashmir, the encircling mountains form a cordon of silent sentinels all round; sometimes veiled in soft, drifting grey mists, sometimes sharp and clear and glistening in their garb of winter snows, or again, perhaps, equally clear and distinct in the pure fresh air and tender green of spring.

To-day Mahadeo and the nearer hills are red and brown, whilst soft distance tones down the farther mountains to delicate shades of pink, mauve, and blue. This bold massive peak, Mahadeo, is a great feature of any view on the Anchar, and, like the mountains that "looked down on Marathon," Mahadeo looks down on the Hari Parbat, and the Hari Parbat, crowned with Akbar's fort, looks down upon Srinagar, the Dal, and the Anchar. I can see it to-day just raising its fort-crowned head above the haze that hangs over the city of Srinagar, standing up there all by itself, just as Parvati the goddess dumped it down on Jaldeo the wicked demon,

who had so long evaded the pursuit of Kashaf. And since that day the hill has imprisoned Jaldeo beneath it, and has been called the Hari Parbat,[1] and the beautiful country of which it forms the centre has been known as Kashafmir or Kashmir, the Land of Kashaf.

As my boat follows those of my two fellow-sportsmen along the broad waterway, a gentle breeze stirs the reeds on either hand; down in the cool depths of the crystal clear water shoals of little fish dart away to hide amongst the thick, gently waving weeds; a couple of pied kingfishers hover high over the water searching for the small fish; whilst a pair of ospreys circle round looking for the larger ones. All is very peaceful and quiet. Except for a man or two here and there cutting weeds no one is to be seen, but there is a wealth of animal and insect life all round.

Swifts skim over the water and reeds; dragon-flies are here, there, and everywhere; high overhead a long stream of vultures follow one after another, sailing through the air, with apparently motionless wings, towards some carrion of which these ever-ready scavengers have got news. Graceful terns with their beaks shining orange-red in the sun are by no means rare; and now and then flocks of starlings are to be seen swooping and swerving over the reed tops almost like teal, startling the little yellow-headed wagtails running about on the lily pads, and the warblers in the rushes as they swish over their heads. From the top of some tall chenar trees on the left, where an amphibious kind of village manages to exist, wedged in between the Anchar and the main river, come the shrill cries of a pair of fish-eagles; and farther on a marsh-harrier may

[1] Hari Parbat. Bernier, who visited Kashmir about 1665, describes this hill as being luxuriant with trees and gardens, from the greenery of which it derives its name, "Hirney Purvet."

be seen fully maintaining its name and reputation by chivying a flock of teal.

But now it is time to "sit up and take notice," for the occupant of the leading boat has just dropped a snipe that got up out of the reeds to his right; and the gun in the second boat has missed a couple more that rose at the discharge. The boatmen paddle along slowly now, and in this manner several more snipe are picked up by the time we reach a point where an irregular passage through the rushes and floating weed branches off to the left. After a few words of explanation, silence is enjoined and shooting forbidden until we are all ready in our places, for this is the first bit of jheel we are to beat, and one of the best in the whole Anchar.

Soon one gun drops behind, and his shikara is wheeled to the left, and its sharp prow forced into a thick clump of reeds, which serve both as a screen and also to hold it steady. The remaining two boats, of which mine is one, are silently forced on through the thick surface-weeds, being half paddled, half punted, until each gun has reached his allotted place. Many snipe have been seen in this last hundred yards or so, but our approach has been so quiet and slow, that most of them rise, only to settle again a little farther in towards the centre of what we intend to beat.

All is now ready, and the beaters, who have gone round a different way in three or four other boats, begin their advance towards us. At first the frequent "pénch, pénch" of rising snipe may clearly be heard, but the birds are seen to go down again between ourselves and the beaters, who are still a long way off. Soon, however, they put up a whisp of some half-dozen snipe, which, as is generally the case with whisps, are much wilder than

single birds. "Pénch, pénch, pénch!" such an outcry as they rise higher and higher, and come straight towards the gun on the left. Bang, bang! and he probably has a couple; but I have no time to look, for I know well that the first shot will be the signal for a general stampede amongst the snipe. One gets up in front of me, from almost under my nose, and is brought down as he tries to go away back; several more swerve at seeing the centre gun, and cross my front, alas! with impunity. Some fairly easy shots now follow, if only one is used to them (for driven snipe take some getting into), and the snipe come out in numbers that surprise one.

Every possible kind of shot is offered. Now one comes along fast and low, straight towards me; now several more come together, but they see me and swerve off just as they get within range. Next a high bird comes straight down the line, and then suddenly jinks back, without the loss of a feather, in spite of a considerable expenditure of powder and shot.

Soon the beaters draw near, and such birds as have settled between us and them, and have lain low, are put up one after another, mostly coming past us fast and fairly low. One bird, hit as he goes away behind, towers, and suddenly the fluttering wings cease their rapid beatings, the head and long bill fall forward, his two thin legs drop, and he comes gently to the ground, his body spinning round and round on his still outstretched wings, just like one of those winged seeds falling from a sycamore tree.

The beaters are now close up, and are picking up those birds that have fallen in front of me under the directions of the shikari and coolie in my boat. As soon as they are gathered we go ourselves to pick up those behind. The shikari has marked them down very well, so that they are all found at once, except one bird,

which, after much searching, is found half hidden under a lily pad.

Now only the towered bird remains. The boat is forced through the weeds to within about ten paces of him, but so thick is the tangled mass that we can get no nearer; so the coolie is told to go and get it. This he does in a clever manner common to these marsh folk. On his feet he places a circular sort of snow-shoes of woven willow twigs, and in each hand he takes a paddle, holding it near where the handle joins the blade, which is to the front and flat surface downwards. Thus armed, he makes his way, more or less on all fours, to the snipe and retrieves it, his shoes and paddles supporting him upon the muddy weeds through which he would otherwise certainly sink and be drowned in the deep water and mud below.

The boat gives a lurch as he scrambles in—and I wake to find myself on the Thames. We are alongside the bank into which we have bumped, and a voice says, "Let's have tea!" Certainly, by all means!

CHAPTER XXVI

TOLD BY THE OLD CHENAR

THERE was no doubt about it; the sun *was* hot that fine September day in Kashmir, and the shade of the old chenar tree which grew by a bubbling brook not a thousand miles from Baramula was very inviting. I was within sight of the spot where I was to camp, by the side of the same brook, but well above the village; the coolies, with my kit, were still a long way behind, so there was no reason why I should not accept the chenar tree's invitation to rest in his friendly shade. As I lay there, soft green turf was for me a restful couch, a gnarled root with my coat folded over it formed a good pillow, and the bubbling stream sang to me a cheerful but soothing lullaby. My thoughts sped back to the dusty plains of India, where I had left less fortunate brother officers only a few days before; and I drank in deep gulps of the pure mountain air, as I gazed up at the small patches of blue sky showing through the tracery of the chenar's foliage.

It was so peaceful, so refreshing, and yet so drowsy, for the hum of bees and many other insects added a soft drone to the song of the brook. I remember my eyes did close, just as I was wondering how old the chenar tree was, and who had planted it; so perhaps it was the fact that my eyes had closed—closed in sleep, though I knew it not—which prevented my being in the least surprised when I heard the old chenar tree say: "Yes, that is so, we are indeed the nobility of the tree society in this

country. There are many other fine trees, but none, I may say, have received the attention and honour from Royalty, and the ministers of Royalty, which my family has been accorded. In our childhood it was Royalty who introduced us into this beautiful country, and cared for us during our youth until we grew strong and big, and were, in our turn, able to repay the debt by spreading our arms over the heads of generations of great ones to give them shade and rest.

"Oh yes. We see and hear a lot of funny things; my cousins in the gardens of Shalimar and Nishat and around Srinagar of course see and hear more of importance than I do, for they are on the spot where even in these days men of Royal blood still sometimes walk. Moreover, they are town folk, whereas I am but a country mouse; and as the Kashmiris say, 'The village tiger and the city dog are equal.' To be sure they are sharp fellows those city dogs; but even I in my little village here get plenty of amusement every day. Indeed, it was only a few months ago that I witnessed doings which amused me as much as anything I have heard since, when I was young, my old father told me how Bir Bal scored off the Mahomedans who tried to bring him into disgrace with the king.

"What! You don't know who Bir Bal was? Well, these are degenerate days, considering that Bir Bal was the greatest minister of one of the greatest emperors that has ever sat under a chenar tree; but there, 'You are but a calf, and your horns have not yet sprouted,'[1] and how should you remember Bir Bal or his master the Emperor Akbar, though the Kashmiris preserve his memory in many a proverb and wise saying.

"Oh yes, it needed a smart Hindu to score off the Mahomedans at the court of a Mussalman emperor, but

[1] A Kashmiri saying for one who is young and innocent.

Bir Bal was the man to do it; and, what's more, he did it.

"How? you say. Well, you may have heard the Kashmiris say sometimes, that a job they have to do is like counting the waves of the river. If you haven't, it doesn't matter; you may take it from me that they do say it, and they mean that they have been set an impossible task. Now that was the task that Akbar set Bir Bal and another Mussalman minister. The latter went off, and after a time, finding that he couldn't do it, came back and made excuses to the king, who promptly turned him out of office. Bir Bal, having thought over the matter, demanded assistance from the king in the form of a party of soldiers and a sum of money. With this money he built posts all along the river at regular intervals, and in them he stationed the soldiers, with orders to fine every boat coming up or down stream for disturbing the water and upsetting the calculations of Bir Bal, the king's minister, who was counting the waves of the river. In this manner a lakh of rupees was soon collected, and Bir Bal returned to the court, where the Emperor at once demanded to know the number of the waves of the river, in answer to which the minister at once threw down the bags of money before the throne and said, 'One lakh, your Majesty!' The Emperor was so delighted with Bir Bal's wit—and the money—that he bestowed still greater honours upon him."

The old chenar tree's leaves rustled with mirth and his limbs creaked with laughter as he continued: "One of the smartest men I have known, that Bir Bal; he'd steal the very surmah[1] out of your eyes without your knowing it; but for all that he'd have been done for, had he not been blessed with a little daughter as smart, or even smarter, than himself.

[1] Surmah = antimony, used for pencilling the eyes.

"What did his daughter do? Well, it was really that which I was laughing at just now. You might have thought that Bir Bal's Mussalman rivals would have given up trying to catch him out; but no, they continued to scheme against him: this was the form their plot took. You shall know that the Emperor had been unwell, and consequently in a bad temper, a chance upon which the plotters were not slow to seize. By means of big bribes they persuaded the king's physicians to inform their Royal patient that bullock's milk was the only thing that would cure his ailment. As they had anticipated, Bir Bal was at once ordered to produce some bullock's milk, which, as you may imagine, was a task more difficult even than counting the waves of the river, and one, moreover, which Bir Bal recognised as being a plot to ruin him.

"Even the wily minister was overcome by the impossibility of the task; but it was at this juncture that his daughter stepped in. Having heard her father's trouble, she went to the palace grounds, where she knew that at a certain hour the Emperor was accustomed to walk. With her she took a quantity of soiled clothing, which she proceeded to wash in one of the fountains in the gardens. As she expected, the Emperor came out in the early morning to take the air, and seeing a girl washing clothes, asked her who she was, and what she was doing; to which the girl replied, 'Oh, I am of Bir Bal's household, and I am washing linen; for have you not heard that last night Bir Bal, your minister, gave birth to a son?'

"The Emperor was greatly surprised at this, and said, 'But how can a man give birth to a child?' 'Oh,' answered Bir Bal's daughter, 'just as easily as a bullock can give milk!' The Emperor then at once understood, and appreciated the joke, and sending for Bir Bal, then

and there conferred upon him further honours and rewards. What was it made me laugh so the other day? Well, it was a small matter compared with the doings of people like Bir Bal and the Emperor Akbar; but for all that it was amusing, and the actors in the drama being inhabitants of my own village, I heard all about it, and it was especially interesting to me. It is true the Persians say, 'Himmat i mardan maddad i Khuda,' 'God helps those who help themselves'; but this does not apply to such knavery as is often performed by some of the so-called shikaris in Kashmir nowadays, and sure enough this knave[1] 'set out for the bunniah's and arrived at the baker's.' The whole plot was arranged under my own shade, so I know all about it.

"You shall know that some time ago a certain sahib, even younger and more ignorant than yourself, arrived at this village, escorted here by the knave—no, never mind what his name is—who was acting as his shikari. Now as you have doubtless heard said, 'One man's beard catches fire and another man warms his hands by it'; and this rogue of a shikari was determined to warm his hands by singeing the beards of the innocent young sahib and a very poor man of his own village who owed him some money.

"As they approached me," continued the chenar, "that badmash shikari was saying, 'Will you help me in this matter of showing the sahib a bear? If you will, I will excuse you your debt of five rupees which you owe me.'

"'Very good,' answered the poor coolie, 'I will help you if you swear to forgive me the debt; for in these hard times one can "scarce find a cat even to make a

[1] An expression often used by Kashmiris when speaking of a man whose plans have miscarried.

stew of," and as for rupees, they are "as scarce as ashud."[1] What is it you want me to do?'

"'To-night take that small black bullock of yours over the other side of the hill; there is good grazing there, and he can graze all day. To-morrow evening I will take the sahib—may his eyes be opened and see nothing!—to the little spur where Kaidra has a patch of tromba, whence he will get a good view of all that thick scrub jungle, in which I have told him he is sure to see a bear. On this occasion your bullock must be the bear. It is a better arrangement than a man with a black blanket, for the last time we did that, that son of a bear Noora, who had the blanket, let it get caught in a thorn bush, and pulled half off him, so that it was only by the mercy of Allah that the sahib didn't see him. Now you must be careful not to let your bullock stray over the hilltop until it is dusk, and when you do drive it over, make it go where the scrub runs in patches right up to the top of the ridge. But stay, I will send Raj Walli with you, for you are as stupid as an owl, and as much use as a sickle to cut meat with!'

"Talking, talking, it was all arranged that the sahib should be shown a black bullock in place of a bear the following evening, and the shikari went off to the camp to prepare his part of the ruse. When the sahib had had his dinner, and was sitting comfortably over the camp fire smoking his pipe, happy and contented, and prepared to think well of everybody, the shikari approached with a respectful salam.

[1] Ashud. The name of a certain kind of grass, which bears are said to search for and eat before they hibernate; from eating it they are supposed to become drugged, and to fall into a sleep which lasts throughout the winter. In the Shina dialect of Astor this grass is called "azhāli"; but as far as I could ascertain, Astor is the only part of the Gilgit Agency where the story is known. To say that anything is as scarce as "ashud" implies that it is very scarce or non-existent.

"'Protector of the poor,' said he, 'it is just as I told you it would be, for the villagers tell me that there is a bear about here, as there almost always is at this time of year. They say it is a huge bear, and that almost every night it comes over the ridge yonder from the big jungles to feed off the Indian corn. To-morrow night, if it is your honour's pleasure, we will sit up for him, and, if luck is with us, he may come over the ridge before it is dark.'

"The sahib in his innocence was greatly pleased, and thought that he was indeed lucky to have secured the services of such an excellent shikari.

"That night, so I heard later, the shikari spent in his house doctoring up an old black bear skin, which he had shot the winter before and secreted in his house. His whole family were set to work upon it: first it was thoroughly wetted and pummelled until it became fairly soft, after which it was rubbed over with ghi. It was probable that the hair would come out later, but that did not matter: the skin-curer in Srinagar would be blamed for that, and could make his own excuses.

"The next evening I saw them start off, and heard the shikari telling the sahib that there was no necessity to take the glasses with them; for, added he, 'if the bear comes, it will be straight in front of us, where anyone can see it—unless, of course, it does not come until after dark, when the glasses would not help us.' So off they went, and I saw them take up their position behind the big rock just above Kaidra's field of tromba, some five hundred yards in front of which was the scrub-covered slope where the bear had orders to appear. The owner of the bullock did his work well, and just as it was getting dusk a black object could be seen moving about amongst the scrub near the top of the ridge.

"Now the difficulty was to get the sahib to shoot.

Of course it was an absurdly long shot in the failing light, and no one could be expected to hit a beast under those conditions; but then he wasn't supposed to, so that didn't matter; the thing was, the sahib must be persuaded to let off his rifle. At first, excited as he was, the sahib hesitated, but gently and quietly the rogue played upon his vanity. 'Oh no, sahib,' I heard him say, 'it is not far, really; it is only the light which makes it look so far. Jones sahib shot two bears upon this very spot with two bullets, and your honour's rifle is a better one than Jones sahib's. Shoot now whilst the light lasts, for in my opinion the bear will come no lower until it is quite dark.' So at last, unwillingly, the sahib consented to shoot; but he was not such a fool as I at first thought, for I saw him raise the sight of his rifle before he fired. The unfortunate bullock gave a plunge and a lurch, and then bustled away over the ridge; for his owner pulled hard upon a long string that was through his nose as soon as the shot was fired.

"'Shabash! sahib. Shabash!' cried the shikari; 'he's hit, properly hit! I told your honour it was not too far for a shot. It is too late, nothing can be done now; but I have every hope that we shall find the bear dead in the morning somewhere beyond the ridge.'

"I simply rustled with laughter when I heard the rogue say this; for he did not know, as I did, that by a wonderful chance the young sahib *had* hit the object he had aimed at—the unfortunate bullock! Oh yes, when I saw that, I knew there would be trouble to come. Anyhow the sahib was pleased, and was beginning to think himself a very fine shikari, and to picture to himself the bear's skin pegged out in camp on the morrow. The rogue, too, was so far well pleased with the success of his plot, but he was not through with it yet; he still had to prevent the sahib from going with him next

morning. 'No, sahib,' I heard him say, 'why should your honour trouble yourself. You rise at your leisure to-morrow and have your breakfast, whilst at dawn I will go and follow the tracks of the bear. If it has died after going a little way, as I expect, I will take off its skin and bring it back; if it has gone far I will see where it has gone to, and then come back to you, and then we can all go after the bear together. Now, if I have your honour's permission, I will go to the village, where a friend has asked me to have dinner with him. Salam, and may your honour soon be made a general!'

"So off went the rogue, and after a good meal in his own house and many jokes at the sahib's expense, he started off in the dark with the bear skin, which he took over the ridge to a village on the other side, where he spent a very comfortable night with a friend. Next morning the skin was again well rubbed with ghi, and the blood of a fowl smeared about it in a very realistic manner, though it would not have taken in an old hand for a moment.

"The sahib was all impatience for his faithful shikari's return, but the latter was in no hurry, and about midday sent off a man to say that he had just found the bear dead after following it a long way, and that as the sun was now hot he would skin the bear and stretch its skin at once in the nearest village, so that it should not go bad; he would travel back with it in the cool of the evening. Thus it was that when he did return, the old bear skin, by the flickering light of the camp fire, looked to a novice passably like that of a bear just shot and partially cleaned and dried. The next day the delighted sahib marched back to Baramula, where he bestowed much bakhshish upon the shikari, and went off up the river in a houseboat, thinking what a fine shot he was at big game.

"But as I said in the beginning, the rogue of a shikari, 'set out for the bunniah's and arrived at the baker's'; and it was over the matter of the wounded bullock that he came to grief. The poor owner of the beast was naturally indignant at losing the single animal he owned—for it soon died—and claimed compensation in full from the shikari, who refused to pay it, thinking he was very well out of the whole affair, and that the man dare not say anything about a case in which he had been implicated. But he forgot the proverb which says, that a stupid friend is sometimes more dangerous than a wise enemy; for the owner of the bullock, remembering only the injustice, and longing for revenge, went off to the nearest tehsil to make his complaint.

"Now it so happened that, as he was going to the tehsil, he met the very sahib who had shot his bullock, and whom he recognised through having seen him in camp and having carried a load for him. This, thought he, was a heaven-sent chance, for were not the Sahib-log famed for their justice! At once, therefore, he began his plaint, asking the sahib, who was his father and his mother, to pay him for the bullock which he had shot. The young sahib did not understand in the slightest what the man was talking about, but it so happened that there were with him another and older sahib and his shikari, an old man well known as a good and reliable shikari. With the latter's help the whole thing was brought to light; but as both sahibs were leaving for the Punjab early the next morning, all they could do was to hand the matter over to the local officials.

"Did they get heavily punished, you ask? Oh no, they were never punished publicly; but the tehsil people had the time of their lives for the next month,

and a nice pile they made out of it. They couldn't squeeze anything out of the man who had lost his bullock—he was too poor already—but the shikari paid *them* compensation for the bullock instead of to the owner, so that indirectly it came from him. Then of course, causing the death of a cow in Kashmir is such a very serious sin, that it needed a large amount of money to cover it, not to mention the cost of squaring the matter as far as the Game Laws were concerned. Yes, without a doubt, that was one of the most profitable cases the tehsil chuprassis and others have had for a long time.

"No, I don't mind telling you; the tehsildar's name was ——"

"Sahib! sahib! Let us go on, the coolies have arrived." It was the voice of my shikari which had broken in upon the chenar tree's story, and I'm afraid he didn't understand a bit when I rubbed my eyes and said, "I'd give a lot to know the name of that tehsildar!"

It was not until nearly three years had passed by that I found myself once more resting under the old chenar.

"Yes," he answered to my inquiry after his health, "I am flourishing on the whole, though I am suffering from great irritation of the skin, such as is common amongst the members of my family; but I must not grumble, for there are many others who are in a far worse plight than I am, for they have suffered so much that their trunks have become quite hollow, and any gale of wind may bring them down."

He looked just as fine and strong as ever, but I noticed that his bark was peeling off in big flakes, which was, I suppose, owing to the skin disease of which he spoke.

"Where have you come from," continued the old tree after a pause and a sigh.

"From the Punjab," I replied; "and very glad I am to be here, for there has been no rain, and the dust on the tonga road was awful."

"Zé sumé satōran dar ān pahan dasht.
Zamīn shash shūd o āsmān gasht hasht,"[1]

(From the trampling of the war-steeds on that field of battle
The Earths have become six and the Heavens became eight.)

he quoted with a chuckle.

"Worse than that, for

"Zamīn āsmān, āsmān shūd zamīn,"

(The Earth the Heaven, the Heaven the Earth became)

I answered, paying him back in his own coin.

"Ho! ho!" laughed he; "you are getting on. So you have been reading the Sekunder Nameh since last we met, when you were so ignorant that you did not even know who Akbar's Nao Rattan were.

"Yes, Nao Rattan; Akbar's Nao Rattan: don't you know what that means? Tobah! You are still pretty ignorant.

"Well, 'rattan' means the choicest part, the essence of anything; for instance, cream may be called the 'rattan' of milk. The Emperor had nine ministers whom he had chosen from amongst the most able men he could find, and these nine picked ministers were always known as Akbar's Nao Rattan.

"Who were they? Well, let me see; my memory is getting rusty, but at any rate Todar Mull, Abul

[1] This quotation is based upon the Mussalman idea that the Universe consists of seven earths and seven heavens; and implies that the number of horses was so great, that from their galloping one whole earth was raised in the form of dust and made an extra heaven.

Fazal, Faizi, Bir Bal, and Hakim Hamam were the most famous.

"Oh, it was Bir Bal I told you about last time, was it? Yes, yes; I was sure I had talked about something to do with the Nao Rattan. What did I tell you?

"To be sure; how Bir Bal scored off the people who tried to get the better of him: the story of the Eight Eggs, I suppose?"

"It was nothing to do with eggs," I remarked, "it was about counting the waves of the river, and——"

"But don't you know about the eggs?" he interrupted, as if quite keen to pounce upon something I didn't know. "No! Well, as it is not a very long story, I don't mind telling it to you; for at least you take an intelligent interest in what I say. Well, as usual where Bir Bal was concerned, it was a case of

"Chāh kanda rā chāh dar pésh——

(The digger of the well fell into it himself.)

"The other eight ministers persuaded the Emperor to have a small tank built, and said that each of his ministers in turn would dive into the tank and produce something from the bottom for the Emperor, in token of their loyalty and ability, adding, that anyone who was unable to perform this feat was quite unworthy of being one of the Emperor's ministers. They arranged amongst themselves secretly that eight eggs should be placed in the bottom of the tank—one for each of the first eight ministers to dive in; and that Bir Bal was to be delayed by some ruse, so that when he, the ninth and last, should go into the water there would be no egg for him to produce. Thus he would fail where all the others had succeeded, and would be disgraced before his sovereign.

"So at the appointed time when the Emperor arrived at the tank all the ministers were present except Bir Bal, to whom many men had been purposely sent with petitions and other papers so as to make him late. Last of all, just as he arrived, it came to the turn of Bir Bal after each of the other ministers had in turn dived into the tank and brought up one of the eggs which had been placed just where they could easily lay hands on them. All present wondered what Bir Bal would do, and expected to hear him make some excuse; but Bir Bal, without being in any way disconcerted, jumped into the tank as the others had done, but instead of bringing out an egg with him as they had all done, as soon as he rose to the surface he screamed out in a loud voice 'Kūkerū-kūn! Kūkerū-kūn!' (Punjabi equivalent for "Cock-a-doodle-do!")

"The Emperor asked him what he meant by it, and why he had not brought an egg for him as the others had, to which Bir Bal answered readily: 'Oh, that is but natural, for they are all chickens, and it is their job to lay eggs; but I am the cock that rules the roost, and I thought I would just crow to remind them that I am their master!' The Emperor, seeing through the whole plot, was greatly amused, and gave Bir Bal a big reward for his cleverness; for Akbar was not so easy to hoodwink as are some people nowadays.

"No, no, you mustn't take offence; I don't mean to say that folks in the old days were any more clever than you are nowadays; but Akbar was himself an Oriental, and so, being a clever man into the bargain, could not be taken in by other Orientals as you Sahib-log often are. For example, look how that old servant you had last time we met used to take you in; what a fortune he made out of you one way and another. And yet, at the time, you were prepared to swear that

there was no better or more honest servant in India. But I see you no longer have him, so I suppose you must have found him out and got rid of him?"

"Well," I replied, "I did begin to lose my faith in him, and as I became more acquainted with this country, I began to object to some of his most barefaced depredations. At last, one day, when he claimed payment for certain things at an amount just double what he really gave for them, I had to answer like Alexander the Great:

"Zamāna dīgar gūna āyīn nihad,
Shud ān mūrgh o k'o khāya zarīn nihad.[1]

(Times now have changed,
The fowl that laid those golden eggs is dead.)

And when he found that the fowl was really dying, if not actually dead, he found that Peshawur, where I was stationed, did not suit his health, and asked for leave to depart and a certificate of faithful service."

"Yes, yes," rejoined the fatherly old tree, "I am truly sorry to have to say it, but speaking of natives of India generally, you will find that the more you learn about them, the more will you realise how little you know, and the more you will realise that there is scarcely one whom you can trust implicitly. There are men, splendid fellows, who have fought for the Sirkar right valiantly all over the world, for whom sahibs may, and do, entertain the liveliest feelings of friendship and esteem; but, as a whole, you may take it from me, that almost every Oriental has one weak spot at least, with regard to which he cannot be implicitly trusted.

"What kind of a weak spot do I mean? Well, I should say that, in the case where the best type of men

[1] This is said to have been Alexander's answer to Darius, when the latter demanded from him the tribute which his father, Philip, had been accustomed to pay.

are concerned, it is as often as not a matter of personal enmity, religion, or family feud: they may be as straight as any man in the world until that family feud comes to the fore, and then, if you are aware of its existence, cease at once to place faith at all where previously you placed it with perfect confidence.

"Now I should like to ask you a question. While your servant was robbing you right and left, did any one of your other servants attempt to help you by giving you a hint of his behaviour; or did they wait until he had gone, and then tell you all about him?

"Quite so; just as I thought. Not a word would they say as long as he was your headman, but as soon as he was gone, a perfect torrent of stories about his villainies. They, none of them, had any prospect of stepping into his shoes when he was gone, and moreover knew that with a fresh head servant they might be displaced by some of his friends and relations; so as long as they had nothing to gain by it, why make a fuss?

"Prison. Oh no, I don't think so. They have no great fear of going to prison, though they do fear greatly the police and their own tehsildars; but police and tehsildars by no means always imply prison, even if the accused are guilty, as you may remember in the case I told you about last year. You see, to the poor man your prisons are quite comfortable, and he is regularly fed free as long as he is there, and quite possibly learns a trade in the meanwhile which stands him in good stead later. One year a man shot a red bear over an animal which it had killed. It so happened that a sahib turned up there next day, and getting to hear about it, reported the whole matter. The sahib's skikari tried to hush it up, for almost all skikaris are loth to embroil themselves with the villagers, which

fact is one of the great difficulties with which the Game Laws officials have to contend; but the sahib was determined to have some one's blood, and so the police turned up and arrested the man who had shot the bear. Now this man was by trade a blacksmith, and was often in request in the village; moreover, he was the only breadwinner of his family, so you see it was most inconvenient for his village and his own family that he should go to prison.

"Obviously something had to be done, and this is what they decided upon. The man whom the police arrested stoutly denied having shot the bear, and his old uncle, who was too old to do much work to support the family, came forward and confessed to being the real culprit. He had been so enraged, he said, at the bear's killing his favourite cow, that he took his gun with which he used to shoot in the days when there were no Game Laws, and shot the bear from a machan when he returned to the kill. The police did not mind who went to prison as long as they got some one, to show how capable and zealous they were in the performance of their duties; so the old man was marched off, and did three weeks in jail without any great discomfort to himself, thereby saving his family and village from all inconvenience.

"Such things are by no means uncommon, especially in India, where the well-supervised jails are doubtless a good deal more comfortable than in Native States.

"You are quite right, it is very difficult to enforce the Game Laws; but even as they are they have done a vast amount of good, and have saved the game in Kashmir. There are many 'badmāsh' shikaris in the country, and so long as there are sahibs who will allow themselves to be duped by the old heads, either shot by local shikaris or picked up by shepherds, palmed off on

them as the heads of animals they have wounded, and which have been recovered later, so long will the 'bad-māsh' shikari and the poacher flourish.

"In Baltistan, Haramosh, and elsewhere there is regular poaching going on, for the local people know that they can get very good prices for good heads. Even if a Kashmiri shikari cannot be found to buy them for an unsuspecting sahib, then there are plenty of men going down to the Punjab in the cold weather who will take a head or two in their kit, with the knowledge that there is a sale for them down there. Anyone who has sufficient money at his disposal and is in no hurry for his heads can purchase a better specimen of almost any Himalayan game in Rawul Pindi than he is likely to shoot, with considerable hard labour, on leave in Kashmir. And, unfortunately, there *is* a demand for such heads, as is shown by the big price that was paid for a thirty-inch shapo head not long ago.

"No, the Game Laws were framed, in the first instance, to prevent the extermination of the many grand and beautiful animals that inhabit these mountains, and, secondly, to secure sport for coming generations of Sahib-log; and it is mainly in the hands of you sahibs to see that those laws are effective. The officials of the Game Preservation Department have done, and are doing, their utmost for the animals and the sportsman, and it is for these sportsmen to give them every assistance they can.

"However much sportsmen may be new to the game, let them refuse to be imposed upon; let them insist upon seeing the skin, the meat of the animals with their own eyes. Game is undoubtedly often wounded at dusk, but it is seldom it cannot be recovered, or at least seen again, next day, unless it is but very slightly wounded;[1]

[1] I do not refer to bears of course, which are very tough animals, and often cover very long distances even when mortally wounded.

and even if the stricken animal has died in the meantime, and the vultures and crows have picked it to pieces, the feet will be there somewhere if nothing else. If you can't go yourselves, make your shikari produce the feet; but, best of all, insist on seeing for yourselves.

"I know these Kashmiri shikaris are most plausible, and that it probably means a certain amount of trouble to go to Srinagar or to write about a case concerning which you yourself are perhaps doubtful. Anyhow, I know that for these or other reasons many cases do occur which never reach the ears of the Secretary of the Game Preservation Department. Even if you do report it, there are still plenty of influences at work which may prevent him getting to the bottom of it; so report, and report fully to him all cases, even suspected cases, of poaching or of the buying and selling of heads.

"Without your help his difficult task becomes well-nigh impossible; for your shikari, even if he is a good man, will never care to embroil himself in a case with local people from whom he may often need assistance in the future; and even if he does so, there is no knowing what influence the culprit has behind him to get him off. This is bound to be the case so long as the smaller officials are open to receive bribes; and at present it is quite impossible to pay wages sufficiently high to attract the right sort of men to undertake the duties of game-watchers.

"Certainly, if also you have any suggestion or complaints to make, bring them forward; the hard-worked Secretary of the Game Preservation Department will be only too glad to hear them, and will no doubt act upon your suggestion if he approves of it, or will explain to you the difficulty he has in coping with the very point which you bring forward.

"Do I think that there are parts of the Game Laws which might be changed with advantage?

"Yes, most certainly I do; but, then, it is purely a matter of opinion, and many people might disagree with me. For instance, as being an old tree which has spread his shade and watched over many generations of Kashmiri peasants, with all their faults and all their good points clear to me, I would suggest that in some districts at least the peasants should be allowed to shoot black bears that come into their fields. These beasts are very common, and do a vast amount of damage to crops and cattle. They are forest-loving animals, and whilst miles upon miles of forest wave upon the hill-sides of Kashmir, the black bear is not likely to be exterminated; moreover, the skin is of so little value—seven or eight rupees—that there is no great inducement to go and shoot him unless he actually comes into the crops.

"Oh yes, I know that; and it's quite true that if you let them have guns at all they will probably take advantage of your kindness and shoot other things besides black bears; but I simply put the matter up from the peasants' point of view, for there certainly are places where the bears do cause so much damage as to be a serious trial to the people.

"What else would I suggest? Well, first of all, that markhor be, if possible, even more strictly protected than they are at present. They are animals which, if once really shot out, would be very difficult to replace. At present the stock is very low, but in no worse state than were the Kashmir stags at one time, and see how they have increased with careful protection. Raise the size of heads which may be shot to 46 inches, and adhere strictly to the rule. A head measuring less than that is really scarcely worth shooting, and also it is in most cases the animals who have horns of 46 to 48 inches that are

just reaching their prime for purposes of breeding. But as long as 44-inch heads may be shot, shikaris will persuade their sahibs to shoot them if they can find nothing bigger, rather than return empty-handed; and many sahibs are, and cannot help being, dependent upon their shikaris for judging the length of the horns of animals which possibly they have never seen before. In this way there will be fewer markhor shot, and perhaps it is rather bad luck on a certain number of sportsmen who may have to return empty-handed from markhor shooting, but surely this is better than having your sons and grandsons telling you later on that there are no markhor, and reproaching you for having exterminated them.

"The case of the ibex is rather different to that of the markhor, in that he is to be found over a far larger area than the markhor, which may be said to be almost purely and solely an inhabitant of the dominions of His Highness the Maharajah of Kashmir. But still, with a view to keeping up the stock of good heads, I should raise the standard of shootable heads from 35 to 38 inches in all districts except Kel Pahar, Kishtwar, and possibly the Wardwan. Fortunately ibex are still very plentiful, but good heads are, as you know, becoming more and more difficult to find, the fact being that with the large number of sportsmen who now shoot in Kashmir territory, every nullah is visited at least once, if not more often, each year, and the ibex are really given very little chance of growing up. Naturally, when a sahib has had a very long journey and spent a lot of money he does not wish, as a rule, to return with nothing to show for it. He looks about for heads of 40 inches or over, and finding none of that size, takes a shot at the biggest he *can* find. I do not say that this is always the case, but that it is so very often is

proved by the large number of small heads brought back to Srinagar.

"There is one other point which refers to many kinds of game, but especially I think to ibex and shapu. You sahibs come up and shoot, each his three or four ibex and two or three shapu, so that there are about two hundred ibex bucks and seventy to a hundred shapu rams shot during each year. And how many does and ewes are shot I should like to know? Not many I venture to guess. And what is the consequence? Small males, who ought still to be in the schoolroom, are seen walking about with harems of wives which they have no business to possess until they are several years older, and until they have fought many a fierce encounter for their possession. If immature bucks can maintain harems without having to fight for them, horns are bound to deteriorate.

"And now as I see your shikari is going to rouse you, and interrupt me like he did before, I will only add one thing. The Game Laws are made for your benefit, and the officials in whose hands they are work hard—much harder than you think—that you may enjoy good sport.

"Work for your own good and that of those to come after you by conforming to and enforcing the laws of the beautiful country in which you are lucky enough to be able to shoot. The same, let me tell you, applies to the trout fishing. My leaves rustle with anger when I hear some of the complaints and unjust criticisms that are made. Rather than grumble, should you take your luck as it comes, and trust to your own skill; and above all, be eternally thankful to the few good and true sportsmen who have spent so much time and labour upon introducing trout into Kashmir for your benefit."

APPENDIX

JAMMU AND KASHMIR STATE

GAME LAWS NOTIFICATION, 1913–14, SAMBAT 1970

1. The rules apply to all European and Indian residents and visitors, ladies as well as gentlemen, including all State subjects and officials, with the exception of those who have been specially exempted by order of His Highness the Maharajah.

2. The rules are applicable to the Kashmir Province, the Astor Tehsil, including the Bunji Niabat, the Ladakh, Skardu, Kargil and Kistwar Tehsils as at present existing, with the following exceptions:

(*a*) All jagir lands belonging to Rajkumar Hari Singh.

(*b*) The Ilaqa of the Raja of Poonch, and

(*c*) All State Game Reserves which now exist or may be hereafter formed. The existing Rukhs or State Game Reserves are:

(1) Chasma Shahi.

(2) Dachigam, and the ridge of hills between 1 and 2.

(3) Khonmoo, and the grass farm between Sangri and Chak-khonmoo.

(4) Khru.

(5) Tral-*cum*-Kerrim and Punjhair, as far as the Bhoogmor Road.

(6) Achabal.

(7) Koolgam.

(8) Khandi and Khoras in the Uri Nullah, the lower boundary of which is the new road to the Haji Pir, and

(9) Hokar Sar Jhil.

(*d*) The following nullahs which are the private Shooting grounds of their respective Rajas, viz. Kapalu, Kharmung, Shigar, Rondu, Kiris, and also those portions of the Mantho and Satpur Nullahs demarcated in 1905 for the Rajas of Tolti and Skardu respectively.

NOTES—(i) The Basin above Pandrittan is a sanctuary.

(ii) In Rajkumar Hari Singh's Jagir and in the Ilaqa of the Raja of Poonch no one is allowed to shoot without the permission of the Rajkumar Sahib and the Raja Sahib respectively.

(iii) Permission to shoot in the nullahs referred to in sub-section (*d*) above can only be obtained from the Rajas concerned.

(iv) Shooting in any Rukh or State Game Preserve is strictly prohibited without the special permission of the Durbar.

(v) No one is permitted to shoot in the Jammu Province, except in Wardwan, Dachan, and Padar (which are part of the Kistwar Tehsil) without a special pass from the Durbar.

(vi) It is forbidden to enter or shoot in any of the Game Laws Sanctuaries mentioned in Rule 12 without a special permit signed by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department.

(*e*) Shooting in any of the Rukhs or State Game Reserves is also strictly prohibited unless the special permission of the Durbar is first obtained, nor can any one without a special pass issued from the Durbar shoot in any of the lands situated in the Jammu Province, except in Wardwan, Dachan, and Padar (which are part of the Kistwar Tehsil), nor can any one shoot or enter any of the Game Laws Sanctuaries mentioned hereafter without a special permit signed by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department.

3. Special rules are issued and a special permit (without which no one is permitted to travel or shoot) is required for:

(*a*) The Astor Tehsil, including the Bunji Niabat, which extends as far as and includes Bulatchi Nullah on the left bank of the river Indus, and the village of Chungus on the right bank.

(*b*) The Kajnag and Kafrkund, including Mozi.

(*c*) The Ladakh Tehsil, including Changchenmo.

NOTES—(i) Applications for such rules and permits should be made by sportsmen in each case to the Secretary, Game Preservation Department.

(ii) All routes leading into Astor from Baltistan are closed, except under special permission, which may be obtained in special cases only from the Political Agent, Gilgit.

(iii) Sportsmen visiting Ladakh and Baltistan should apply for a *parwana* to obtain transport and supplies on these routes to the Secretary, Game Preservation Department.

(iv) Up to the 1st of May, sportsmen will be given no official assistance in obtaining coolies to cross the Zojila and Burzil passes, but will have to make their own arrangements.

4. The driving of Bears, Leopards, and Pigs is permitted from March 15th to September 30th inclusive, and on the grounds open to sport in the hills between Vernag and Baramulla on the south side of the Vale of Kashmir the driving of these animals is allowed from March 15th to November 15th inclusive. With the above exceptions driving game with men and dogs is prohibited.

5. Except in rare instances where, owing to excessive numbers other arrangements become necessary, the destruction of females of Ovis Hodgsoni (the Ammon of sportsmen), Sharpu, Burhel, Markhor, Ibex, Thibetan Antelope, Gazelle

Khakur (Barking Deer), Kashmir Deer, and Brown Bear with that year's cubs, is forbidden.

The Secretary, Kashmir State Game Preservation Department, is, however, authorised to give written permission for a fixed number of females of Sharpu, Burhel, Ibex, Markhor, or Deer to be shot within a defined locality, when he is convinced that such action is necessitated in the interests of sport by the existence of an excessive number of females of these animals. Such permission, if given, is to be restricted to license-holders or to State servants detailed for this work.

6. (*a*) Shooting, killing, and catching of Yak is totally prohibited.

(*b*) No Musk Deer, either male or female, may be killed, taken, or caught, except under Rule 14, license VI, or under the authority of a written order obtained from the Durbar through the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, and such permission shall only be given in rare instances.

(*c*) All shooting, killing, and catching of Ibex is forbidden in the valley of Kashmir, *i.e.* the whole area which comprises the watershed of the river Jhelum and its tributaries above Baramula.

(*d*) The killing of Serow is prohibited between Chashma Shahi and Dachegam Rukhs.

(*e*) The killing of Markhor is prohibited in all nullahs flowing into the Indus above Rondu in Baltistan.

(*f*) The killing of Brown Bears is prohibited in the Kajnag.

(*g*) The killing of Khakur (Barking Deer) is prohibited in all places for a period of three years from Sambat 1968 (1911–12).

(*h*) The killing of Herons is forbidden, except in such places as is necessary for the protection of young trout now being introduced, such places to be previously defined by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department.

(*i*) The killing of Goa (Thibetan Gazelle) is forbidden on the Tsokr-Chumo Maidān, *i.e.* on all ground lying between the Tsokr-Chumo lake and the

Thasangi-La and in all nullahs whose watershed flows into this portion of the Tsokr-Chumo Maidān.

(*j*) All shooting is forbidden in the area defined as a sanctuary for Ovis Ammon under Rule 3, Ladakh Rules.

(*k*) Shooting in the undermentioned areas is reserved for officials employed in Srinagar and residents whose business or work lies there.

1. The Khonmoo basin, *i.e.* the area north and east of a line drawn from Pandichuk village to Weean but outside the limits of Khonmow Rukh.
2. The Brain and Nishat Bagh basins.
3. The Pampur Jhil.
4. No shooting is allowed in these areas without a special permit, which will be issued by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department. These permits will be available for one day only, and must be shown to the watcher on duty when called for.

N.B.—Day permits for these two areas only (2 and 3) may be granted to visitors at the discretion of the Secretary, Game Preservation Department.

Several cases having occurred of the accidental killing of cows and cattle by sportsmen when shooting in the vicinity of native villages, it is particularly requested that special care may be taken to avoid any possibility of similar cases in future.

7. The possession of nets, snares, or other appliances for the express purpose of taking birds or wild animals is illegal, except for men licensed to net in Kistwar for the purpose of catching Hawks, a license for which purpose will be obtained from the Tahsildar of Kistwar.

8. The sale or export for sale of horns or skins of the game animals mentioned in Rule 5, as well as of the skins of Brown Bears, is prohibited. The sale of the skins of Black Bears and Leopards is allowed.

9. Where any person is found in possession of any game or parts of game recently captured or killed, the Court may presume that he has captured or killed such game.

10. The breeding season of Chikor, Partridges, and

Pheasants is considered to extend from March 1st to September 21st, both days inclusive; that of Geese, Ducks, and Teal from April 15th to September 15th; Snipe from April 1st to August 31st, both days inclusive; and during the seasons thus defined no one shall destroy, net, or capture in any fashion any of these birds, nor shall any of their eggs be taken, nor shall any person sell any such birds during the breeding seasons.

11. (*a*) The shooting season of Chikor, Partridges, and Pheasants is considered to extend from September 22nd to the last day of February; that of wild fowl, such as Geese, Ducks, and Teal, from September 16th to April 14th inclusive, and Snipe from September 1st to March 31st. No wild fowl or any of the game birds herein mentioned may be captured by nets, snares, or lines with hooks, by the method known as Kakko-Putta or any similar device.

Exception.—During the shooting season, villagers may snare wild fowl in their fields which have been under cultivation during the previous harvest or which are still under crop.

(*b*) The shooting season of Stags shall extend from September 15th to March 14th. The remainder of the year is close season.

12. The following nullahs are closed until further orders as sanctuaries, and no shooting is permitted therein, nor is any grazing allowed:

I.—The Versiran and Sirbal Nullahs, together with all intermediate ground in the Lidder Valley.

II.—The Kiar Nullah, in the Duchan District of Kistwar.

III.—The Apennai, in the Wardwan.

IV.—Basgo, in Ladakh, and

V.—Rumpack, in Ladakh.

VI.—Aijas Nullah, in the Bandipur District.

VII.—The Nurh and Ghoro basins in Baltistan from Nurh-Buchan village to the spur opposite Goe.

VIII.—Doosoo, in the Nowboog District.

IX.—Soomjam and the Sapphire Mines Nullah, in Kistwar.

X.—Gabdoori and Kunirawal, in the Shamshibiri.

13. The Alchori and Hashopa Nullahs will be opened in Sambat 1970, under the following restrictions:

Each nullah will be limited to one gun for the first period, *i.e.* April 15th to July 14th, and one gun for the second period, *i.e.* July 15th to October 15th.

Special permits will be issued for these nullahs by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, without which no one will be permitted to enter or shoot in them.

Guns for the first period will be allotted by priority of application on arrival in Kashmir, for the second by application from any place. Each gun will be limited to two Ibex only in these nullahs.

14. The State reserve to themselves the right to close any nullah or nullahs at any time during the season on the representation of the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, that the nullah or nullahs in question have been too heavily shot, or for any other reason. The Secretary, Game Preservation Department, is further authorised under this rule to take immediate action, if he is satisfied that it is necessary, reporting the step taken to the Durbar.

15. Licenses to shoot large and small game, and without which no person is permitted to shoot or proceed in search of game, will be granted as follows:

I.—A license, for which Rs. 60 will be charged, in force from March 15th to November 15th, permits the holder to shoot in the nullahs and districts which are open for sport, the following number of animals only:

Markhor of any variety, in all	2
Ibex (of which 2 only in Ladakh)	3
Ovis Hodgsoni (Ammon)	1
Ovis Vignei (Sharpu)	2
Ovis Nahura (Burhel)	4
Thibetan Antelope	4
Thibetan Gazelle	1
Kashmir Stag	2
Serow	1
Brown Bear	2
Tehr	6
Goral	6

Also, subject to Rules 10 and 11 above, small game up to November 15th, and Pigs, Black Bears, and Leopards no limit.

II.—A license of the value of Rs. 20 will permit the holder to kill Black Bears and Leopards and Pigs from March 16th to November 15th inclusive.

III.—A winter license, for which Rs. 50 will be charged, in force from November 16th to March 14th, will permit the holder to kill small game as laid down under license V of this rule, and

Markhor (any variety)	2
Ibex	2
Sharpu	2
Burhel	3
Thibetan Antelope	3
Thibetan Gazelle	1
Kashmir Stag	1
Serow	1
Tehr	3
Brown Bear	2
Goral	3

Pigs, Black Bears, Leopards without limit.

IV.—To meet the special circumstances of Baltistan, Ladakh, Astor, and Gurais a license, of the value of Rs. 10, in force between 16th November and 14th March, will entitle the holder to kill:

(*a*) In Baltistan and Lower Ladakh, *i.e.* below Khalsi on the Indus	Ibex	2
	Sharpu	2
(*b*) In Upper Ladakh, *i.e.* above Khalsi on the Indus	Burhel	2
	Sharpu	2
(*c*) In Astor and Bunji	Sharpu	4
(*d*) In Gurais Valley	Ibex	1
	Brown Bear	1
	Black Bear	2

and small game as laid down under license V (*a*).

These licenses will be strictly limited in numbers, and issued in special cases only by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, on the personal recommendation of the British Joint Commissioner or the Wazir Wazarat.

No person can hold licenses III and IV at the same time.

V.—(*a*) A small game license, for which Rs. 30 will be charged, will enable the holder to shoot Pheasants, Chikor, and Partridges from September 16th to the last day of February inclusive, Geese, Ducks, and Teal from September 16th to April 14th inclusive, and Snipe from September 1st to March 31st.

This license does not entitle the holder to shoot within any forest or jungle inhabited by big game, nor to enter within the line of any boundary pillars or demarcation of the Forest Department, or Game Preservation Department, nor to carry guns or ammunition other than those used for small game shooting.

(*b*) A small game license, for which Rs. 20 will be charged, will enable the holder to shoot as provided under license V (*a*) above, but for a period of two months only, to run from the date of issue of the license.

(*c*) A small game license, for which Rs. 35 will be charged, will enable the holder to shoot as provided under license V (*a*) above, and also to use punt and long guns for the purpose of killing wild fowl.

N.B.—Sportsmen holding any of these licenses may kill Ram-chikor between the dates of September 16th and May 1st; Pigs on the left bank of the Jhelum above Srinagar, and on both sides of the river below Srinagar, but outside a 5-mile limit of any of the State big game reserves; Leopards, including the Ounce, Wolves, Foxes, Martens, and other vermin.

Quail shooting is free to all.

N.B.—No sportsman may take out more than one each of the above licenses (I) to (V).

VI.—A special license, for which Rs. 30 will be charged, and which may be repeated in the case of Musk Deer only, will enable the holder to kill one Musk Deer, or if a holder of Rs. 60 No. I license, or the Rs. 50 No. III license to kill one specimen extra of any one of the animals laid

down in the license in question, except Markhor, Ovis Ammon, and Goa.

Any sportsman, however, who shall through accident or carelessness kill a greater number of any of the above animals than is permitted under the terms of his license, will be called upon to take out a No. VI Rs. 30 license for each animal so killed.

The State reserve to themselves the right to refuse to issue any of the above licenses.

N.B.—After a license has once been taken out and the licensee has left Srinagar, no exchange or refund can be permitted except in the following cases:

(1) A Rs. 20 No. II license may be exchanged for a Rs. 60 No. I license on payment of the difference, provided that the applicant has not previously been in search of, or shot any of, the animals specially included under the list.

(2) A Rs. 30 No. V (*a*) license may be exchanged for either a Rs. 60 No. I or a Rs. 50 No. III on payment of the difference.

(3) A Rs. 20 No. V (*b*) license may be exchanged for a Rs. 30 No. V (*a*) license on payment of the difference.

16. No one shall take service as a regular shikari with sportsmen until he has been registered by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, and granted a license as on the form appended.

17. Employers of shikaries are advised to insist on the shikaries producing their registration forms, as these show any adverse entries which have been made against them.

N.B.—The employment of local shikaries in their own districts is recommended.

Any sportsman wanting to employ a villager or local man as shikari is requested to communicate his name to the Secretary for registration, in order that he may become liable to the same penalties as the regular shikaries.

18. (*a*) Whoever being subject to the jurisdiction of the Kashmir State Courts commits, abets, or attempts to commit a breach of these rules, or of the special rules for Astor, Kajnag, or Ladakh issued under Rule 2, shall be punished on first

conviction with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to Rs. 25, or with both, and, on second conviction, with imprisonment of either description which may extend to four months, or with fine which may extend to Rs. 100, or with both; and if the offence is one under Rule 6 and 12, he shall be punished on first conviction with imprisonment of either description which may extend to three months, or with fine which may extend to Rs. 100, or with both, and, on second conviction, with imprisonment of either description which may extend to four months, or with fine which may extend to Rs. 100, or with both.

(*b*) In addition to any punishment awarded under (*a*) above, an offender shall be liable to forfeit the gun or other weapons and dogs used in connection with his offence, as well as all trophies which may be the result of the latter; while, if a shikari, he shall also be liable to have his license forfeited for one year, or for such further period as may be considered necessary.

(*c*) If any person, who is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Kashmir State Courts, commits an offence against these rules, or the special rules for Astor, Kajnag, and Ladakh issued under Rule 2, he shall be liable to forfeit his license, and also his gun, weapons, dogs, and trophies as provided in (*b*) above, and his case shall be reported immediately to the Resident for disposal in such manner as he may think fit.

(*d*) Any shikari, watcher, or other person who shall fail to report any infringement of the Game Laws on its being brought to his notice, or being a shikari, who having been suspended for misconduct under Rule 18 (*b*) above, shall take service with sportsmen, shall be liable to be proceeded against under Rule 18, *supra*.

(*e*) Any watcher or employé under the Game Preservation Department or Fisheries who shall make use of his position to levy bribes in any form, or otherwise to oppress or intimidate any person under threats of punishment under the Game Laws, shall be liable to the penalties laid down in this rule.

19. The following dimensions are laid down as a definition of shootable heads permitted to be killed under the terms of the Kashmir Game Laws:

Markhor (of any variety) . . .	45 inches.
Ibex	35 „
Ovis Ammon	38 „
Sharpu	24 „
Burhel	23 „

Kashmir Stag (Barasinga) 35 inches measured from behind along the outside curve.

N.B.—Shikaries will be held equally responsible with their employers that animals under the above dimensions are not intentionally shot.

Records are kept up by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, in the interest of sport, of all heads of exceptional size killed in Kashmir. Sportsmen are earnestly invited to co-operate with the Secretary, and to send him any such exceptional heads they may obtain for measurement and entry in the Kashmir Big Game records.

20. (*a*) The practice of palming off on sportsmen old heads or heads that have been killed by native shikaries being largely on the increase, sportsmen are asked to be very careful about accepting heads as their own, unless they have been gathered by them, or can be absolutely verified as the identical animals they may have wounded. In all cases the head and jawbone should be complete, with the actual decaying flesh adhering to the bones, and sportsmen should insist that other bones, skin, and feet should be produced with the head. Failing the above requirements, the presumption is that the head is

an old one, and the case should be immediately reported to the Secretary, Game Preservation Department. Any attempt by a shikari to palm off such a head shall be considered to be a breach of rule punishable under section 18, *supra*.

In no case should rewards or money be given to shikaries or villagers for heads brought in by them. The purchase of heads is a direct incentive to the encouragement of poaching, and the killing of animals by natives for sale to sportsmen.

(*b*) The attention of sportsmen is called to Visitors' Rule 26. Sportsmen are requested on no account to leave their rifles with their shikaries on quitting a nullah, nor to make presents of firearms or ammunition to natives of the country.

No shikari is permitted to possess any rifle for which he has not taken out a license, and every shikari is warned that if he is found in possession of an employer's rifle, after the employer has left the shooting ground, he will be dealt with under Rule 18.

(*c*) The practice of giving rifles to shikaries for the purpose of following wounded animals, or of offering rewards for the same to local men or others, is not permitted, as it is a direct incentive to poaching and killing animals which cannot be rightly claimed by sportsmen as their own.

21. (*a*) *Rewards.*—Any person or persons who shall give such *bonâ-fide* information with proofs as shall lead to a conviction of a breach of Rule 6 shall be entitled to a reward not exceeding Rs. 40, and of any other rule under these laws to a reward not exceeding Rs. 25. Applications in all cases to be made to the Secretary, Game Preservation Department.

(*b*) The following scale of rewards will be paid by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, for all vermin killed by license-holders and watchers

employed under the Game Preservation Department, and by any others specially authorised to kill vermin:

1. Leopards (snow and common) . . .	Rs.	10
„ (cubs, do. do.) . . .	„	5
(Skins to remain the property of the killer, if a license-holder.)		
2. Wolves, Wild Dogs, Otters, and Lynx .	„	5
3. Foxes and Indian (Pine) Marten . .	As.	4
4. Jackals, Martens (other than above), Wild Cats, Weasels, &c.	„	4
5. Carrion Crow and Cormorants . . .	„	4

In all cases the reward will be paid on the skins being brought or sent before being tanned to the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, by the killer. They will then be stamped under his authority, and returned to the owner if a license-holder. In other cases they will be retained and sold by the Department for the benefit of the killer, or in the case of non-license holders for the benefit of the Game Preservation Department.

Applications for traps should be made to the Secretary, and will be supplied if possible. A small deposit fee of the value of traps will be charged, which will be given back on the return of the traps in good condition.

Skins brought in by the Srinagar skin merchants will not be recognised for rewards.

22. Licence-holders who, by the conditions of the license, are enjoined not to kill more than a specified number of animals, are requested, on the expiry of the period of the license, to return the same to the Secretary, Kashmir State Game Preservation Department, with the statement showing the number of animals killed by them filled in and signed.

23. Sportsmen are particularly requested not to give presents to the Game Preservation Department servants, and to report any irregularities on their part to the Secretary, Game Preservation Department. Game Preservation Department servants receiving presents from sportsmen will be dismissed.

24. Sportsmen are warned that they must report to the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, all cases of serious

injuries received by shikaries, beaters, and other State subjects (with full description and address) whilst employed in beating, &c., in their service, together with a full report on the circumstances of the occurrence, and of any compensation or money reward paid by them to the injured person or his relatives.

Any disregard of this rule may be dealt with by the refusal of a shooting license on any future occasion under the provisions of Rule 14.

25. His Highness the Maharajah may, in writing, relax any or all of the Rules I–X inclusive in favour of any individual.

NOTE.—Applications for licenses may be made to Cockburn's Agency, Kashmir General Agency, Motmid Durbar (Officer-in-Charge, European Visitors), Messrs. Summad Shah, or to the Secretary, to whom all other communications should be addressed either personally or by letter to care of Postmaster, Srinagar. Letters of routine, such as applications for Licenses, Permits, &c., which can be dealt with in the office Game Preservation Department, and do not require the personal attention of the Secretary, should be addressed to—

THE OFFICE,

Game Preservation Department,

Srinagar.

From the above it may be seen that some of the old chenar's suggestions have already been acted upon, such as in the case of Markhor, in which the size of shootable heads has been raised from 44 to 45 inches. H. L. H.

INDEX

Abbotabad, 145
Abu Shaker, 100, 101
Achabal, description of, 258, 259; trout fishing at, 260-269
Adam Khor. *See* Shri Badat
Ain Akbari, 6
Aishmukam, legend of, 11–16, 205
Akbar, 286, 292, 293, 295, 302
Akbar's Nao Rattan, 302, 303, 304
Alexander the Great, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 199, 201, 203, 205, 206, 207, 209, 216, 271, 305
Aliabad, 219
Ali Madad, 176
Al Kaf, 101
Al Makin, 100, 101
Altit, 217, 219, 225, 226, 229
Amarcharting, 217
Amarnath caves, 19
Amir Khan, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 143, 144, 145, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152
Amlook, berries, 43
Ammon, the god, 99, 100
Anantnag, 7
Anchar Lake, snipe shooting on the, 286–290
Arabs, in Kashgaria, 98; historians, 100
Arbabs, 231
Archery, 175, 176
Ari Rai, care of, 19
Arpat stream, 260
Aruntas, 219
Ashkote nullah, 43, 121
Ashud, 296
Asoka, 5, 6
Astor, the bears of, 41, 44, 103, 104; origin of the Rajahs of, 106–110, 111, 112; the markhor of, 117, 118, 131; the Astor River, 141, 154, 155; dialect of, 168, 296
Ataabad, 229
Awantipur, 2
Ayesho, 216, 217, 218
Azhali, 296
Azuré Shamsher. *See* Shamsher

Baba Ghundi, 234, 235, 236
Babla in Gilgiti polo, 158, 168
Badakhshan, 158, 194, 196, 273
Baghal Daning Gialpho, 215
Bagrot, 101
Baldas, 157, 164
Baltal, 240, 241, 243
Baltis, 141, 143, 144, 168, 169; Balti princes invade Gilgit, 192; as fort builders, 225, 244
Baltistan, 93, 106, 108, 142, 214, 215, 244, 245, 308
Baltit, 214, 220, 224, 225, 233
Banbuddhi, 17, 18
Barafu glacier, 214
Baramula, 22, 42, 281, 299
Barasingh, 9
Barmas, old burying-ground at, 95
Baroshushki, 168, 221
Basin, 179, 273
Bathelo, 103
Batur glacier, 210, 224, 225, 233
Bears, concerning bears generally, 22–52; the sport of bear shooting, 24, 25; the cunning of some bears, 26, 27; stalking and tracking, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31; bear's sense of sight, smell, and hearing, 31, 32; bears charging, 35, 36; bear's method of attack, 37, 38; red and black bears interbreeding, 39, 40, 41; hibernation, 41, 42, 43, 44, 56, 57; damage done by bears, 44, 45, 46, 310; bears at a kill, 47, 48, 49, 50; behaviour of bears on being hit, 51, 52; birth of young, 53, 54, 55, 56; method of calling young, 66, 67; a bear honk, 68–74; bears attack upon cattle, 75–78; bear shot over kill, 78–88
Beritz, 219
Bezoar, 121, 122
Bhalu, 38, 50, 84
Bhup Singh, destruction of his army, 154, 155, 156
Bijaldara, 45
Bir Bal, 292, 293, 294, 295, 303, 304
Bobili matting, legend of, 215
Boiyé Shawaran, 214
Bomzooa, 19
Boogmoor, 16
Boorinimal, 21, 44
Borit, Lake, and village, 231
Bosian, 43
Brak Makpun, legend of, 106–110, 192
Brari Angan, 18, 243
Brari Maji, 18, 19
Bringhi stream, 258, 259
Buddha, 6

Buddhist pilgrims, 5
Buddhist relics, 5, 97, 212, 271
Bungas Maidan, 28, 44
Bunji, 92, 141, 154, 155, 156, 162, 193
Burataling, 219
Burung, 219
Burzil Pass, 89
Buz Bazi, 173

CANDACE, 216
Chakdara, 271
Chalt, 210, 211
Chamugarh, 192
Chanegoond, 244
Changal, 9
Chaprot, 211
Chapursan valley, 225, 233, 235, 236, 237
Chaumuri, 160, 161, 200
Chechar Pari, 210
Cheena, 215
Chilas, 82, 103, 121, 130, 142, 145, 162, 164, 168, 174
Chileli, 163
Chili trees, wood and leaves used by Gilgitis, 94, 95, 96, 180
Chiligarhi, custom of, 96
Chillinji Pass, 235, 236
Chinkara, 239
Chiru, 261, 267
Chitral, 97, 142, 192, 235
Choosh, 261, 267
Choosho Bhoto, 217
Chuknari, legend of Brak Makpun and, 106–110
Chukor, 33, 260; shooting, 270–78
Chushoroting, 219

DACHKAT NULLAH, 121
Dainyals, 93, 94, 103, 112, 178, 179, 180, 225
Dainyor, 156, 184, 186, 188
Dal Lake, 5, 286
Damot, 95
Darah Shikoh, 5
Darah wood, 115
Darband, at Khaibar, 233; at Reship Jarab, 234
Darel, 97, 157, 206
Darkot Pass, 194, 196
Darot, 93
Dasht-i-taus, 211
Deobani, 142
Deosai, 28
Dewaro, 207
Dionysos, 96
Dir, 97
Diramiting, 219
Ditzel Dupunghi, 112, 113
Ditzel nullah, 111, 112, 113
Dogra Raj, in Kashmir, 64
Domel, 43
Doomani, 163, 213. *See also* Rakaposhi
Doonga Bela, 131
Doru, 141
Dost Mahomed, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 253, 254
Doyan, 111
Dras, 244
Drawa, 8, 17, 21, 38, 43
Drungiari, 44
Duck shooting, 280–285
Dungus, 109
Durand, Colonel, 94, 212
Dushkin, 111
Dyamir, 103

FELIS UNCIA. *See* Snow leopard
Firmaish, 193, 194
Flying squirrel, 47, 48
Foote berries, 28

GABDURI, 43, 47
Gabra, 38, 43
Gagangir, 240
Gallis, the, 43
Gamalittar, 9
Game Laws, suggestions with regard to, 308–312, Appendix
Gandhara, 97
Ganesh, 214, 217, 220, 221
Ganesh Chish (Golden Peak), 214
Gano, translation of the, 180, 181
Gardiner, Colonel, 169
Ghilzais, 144
Ghulkin, 231
Ghulmit (in Nagar), 213; (in Gujal), 229, 230, 231, 232
Gilgit, 41, 44, 97, 98, 101, 102, 105, 112, 118, 121, 123, 124, 131, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 154, 155, 156, 157, 160, 162, 163, 164, 166, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 178, 179, 182, 183, 184, 185, 192, 193, 197, 198, 206, 211, 272, 274, 278
Ginger Pani, 43, 128
Girkis, 165, 210, 215, 216
Gooch berries, 48, 67, 75
Gor, 122, 160, 200
Goral, 239
Grim, 221
Grunthi, 2
Gujal, 97, 142, 213; the district of, 224, 225; the people of, 230; Gujali houses, 231; leprosy in, 231, 232
Gujars, 17, 28, 44, 46, 50, 63, 64, 130, 169
Gulab Singh, Maharajah, 169
Gulmarg, 22
Gunhar, 12
Gurais, 89
Gurikote, 104
Gus, 115
Gushpurs, 171, 173, 174

HAIDERABAD, 219
Haider Malik, 20
Hajibal, 42, 43
Hakalokutz, 219
Hangul, 9
Haramosh, 141, 142, 143, 308
Haramukh, 34
Hardas, 244
Hareli, 157, 164
Hari Parbat, 286, 287
Harpat, 23, 71, 72, 73
Harun Kashup, 2
Hasora. *See* Astor
Hassanabad, 217
Hattu Pir, 92, 154
Hazal Naril, 161
Hini, 212
Hispar, 210, 216
Hobson-Jobson, 122
Hodar, 162, 163
Hokra, duck shooting at, 280–285, 286
Holi festival, origin of the, 2
Honk, 25; a bear honk, 68–74
Hopar, 214
Hunza, 93, 97, 111, 142, 154, 157, 165, 168, 169, 200, 210, 211, 213; fights with Nagar, 215, 216; descent of the Mirs of, 216, 217, 218; the clan system in, 218, 219, 220, 230; the poor people of, 220, 221, 222; irrigation in, 222, 223; the capital of, 224, 225; floods in, 230; necessity for expansion, 236, 237
Hussaingutz, 217, 219

IBEX, compared with markhor, 127, 128, 142, 161, 225; ibex shooting, 249–256, 311
Indus, 92, 93, 103, 105, 108, 111, 122, 128, 141, 142, 143, 145, 154, 155, 162, 165, 170, 175, 192, 193, 244, 245, 246,
Irshad Pass, 235, 236
Ishkhook nullah and glacier, 235
Ishkoman, 168, 190, 191, 235
Ispinj, 235, 236

JAFFAK, 168
Jainkish, 95, 207
Jaldeo, 286
Jalsa, at Gilgit, 166–177
Jamshid, 184, 185, 186
Jerusalem, Chain of Justice in temple at, 102, 103
Jhelum, 42, 281
Jhula, 143, 244
Jutial, 156, 192

KAFIRKAN, 9
Kagan, 75, 82, 91
Kaji Nag, 5, 7, 11, 17, 41, 42, 43, 54, 76, 117, 121, 123, 128, 130, 131, 205, 206, 281
Kalapani, 90, 91, 92
Kali Koel, 32, 47
Kali Nag, legend of the, 7, 103
Kamre Pass, 89, 93, 141
Kamre Valley, 90, 154
Kanberi, 163
Kand Koura, 41
Kanishka, 5
Kanjut stream, 141, 142, 156, 210, 213 230
Kanokutz, 219
Kar Begar, 105
Karn, meaning of the term, 99
Karnar, 8, 17, 38, 43, 46
Kashgar, 92, 98, 234
Kashat gives his name to Kashmir, 287
Kehndal, 54, 59, 61
Kehnti, 130
Kel Pahar, 41, 311
Kermang, 108, 110, 244
Kesari, 215, 225
Khaibar, 233
Khapaloo, 244
Kharbu, 128
Khotan, 98
Khudaabad, 233
Khushru, 184, 185, 186
Kil, 234, 235
Killik Pass, 97, 224, 233, 234
Kirgah, 155, 157, 163, 178, 179, 273, 274, 275
Kirmin, 235
Kishenganga, 21, 42, 43, 121, 128
Kishtwar, 12, 41, 311
Kissippi, 211
Koi, 159, 221
Koklas pheasant, 11, 33, 34, 54, 59
Kom system in Hunza, 218, 219, 220; in Gujal also, 230
Krikiti, 130
Kulahoi, 34
Kulm, 216
Kuls, 166, 212, 222, 223
Kunjerab, 225
Kurnain, meaning of, 98, 99, 100
Kurokutz, 219

LADAKH, 5
Langoor, 18
Leh, 244
Lepers, 231, 232
Liddar, 11, 12
Liddarwat, snakes of the, 14, 15, 16
Lingur, 215
Longo Brongo, 215
Loozham tree on Nanga Parbat, 103, 104,
Lungari, 60

MACHAN, 68, 69, 80
Mahadeo, 286
Mahomedabad, 229

Majpoori, 43
Makki, shooting bears in, 25; bears' love of, 67
Marakanda, 216
Mardan, 97
Margalla, 271
Markhor, types of, 117, 118; judging length of horns of, 118, 119, 120; meaning of name, 120; markhor and snakes, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127; compared with ibex, 127, 128; their rutting season, 129, 130; big markhor shot, 131–140; also 142, 161, 163, 186, 248, 311
Martund, 2, 19
Mayun, 212
Mehtarjao of Yasin, 170
Mendi, 245
Meros, Mount, 96
Mezahoi, 18
Mianjani, 43
Minawar, 155
Minjal, 61
Minnapin, 213, 214
Minnimarg, 89
Mintaka Pass, 224, 233
Mir of Hunza, the first, 165, 170; descent of the, 216, 217, 218, 230, 232, 236
Mir of Nagar, the first, 165, 170, 171, 176, 212, 213, 216
Misgar, 233, 234
Mishkin, 111
Monal pheasant, 33, 48, 58
Mughlot, 165, 210, 215, 216
Mullah Shah, 5
Mumiai, 122
Mummery, 103
Murkhom, 224
Murkushi, 233, 234
Murree Hills, 42, 271
Musk deer, 60, 61, 146
Muzafarabad, 145
Muzheno bush, 163
Myuri Thum, 218

NAG, connection with snake worship, 7
Naganara, 43
Nagar, 111, 142, 157, 165, 168, 169, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214; fighting between Hunza and, 215, 216, 220, 221; irrigation in, 222, 223
Nagdu, Lance Naik, at Nilt, 212
Nanga Parbat, 9, 34, 89, 93, 103, 142, 154, 206, 282
Naogam, 44
Naukote, 43
Naupur, 179, 186, 187, 206, 274
Nausadda, 43
Nazar Shah, mysterious death of, 227, 228, 229
Nicholson, John, 271
Nildori, 44
Nilt, 212
Nisalo, 190
Nishat Bagh, 6, 292
Nomal, 210
Noor, story of Noor and Ayesho, 216 217, 218
Noorasehri, 43
Nowboog, 258
Nun Kun, 12
Nysa, 96

OLDTHINGTHANG (Olding), 244
Olympias, Alexander's letter to, 99, 100
Ovis Nahura, 142
Ovis Vignei, distribution, 141; shooting, 141–153

PANDAVALARI, 3
Panjhair, 11
Parlad, 2
Passu, 210, 225, 231, 232
Pathans, 144, 219
Patris, 28
Payak Ting, 224
Peri Mahal, 5
Peshawur, 5, 97
Pine-marten, 60
Pir Punjal, 5, 11, 117, 130, 131, 281
Pissan, 213
Pohar Pajjan, legend of, 11–16
Polo, 157, 158, 159, 160, 167, 168
Poonch, 27, 42, 43
Pseudo-Callisthenes, 98, 99, 102
Punial, 170, 174, 179

RAJAHS OF ASTOR, how they came from Baltistan, 106–110; visit to Ranjit Singh, 115, 170
Rajah Ram, ruins of his house, 20
Rajdiangan Pass, 19, 89
Rajparan, 258
Rakaposhi, 103, 111, 113, 142, 163, 213. *See also* Doomani
Ram Chukor, 249
Ram Ghat, 141, 154
Rampur, 43, 93
Ramzan, fast of, 99
Rangawar, 44
Ranjit Singh, 105, 169
Rantas, 17
Rashis, 112
Rawulpindi, 308
Reship Jarab, 234
Reshit, 234, 235, 237
Rinda, 130
Rondu, 108, 110, 143, 165, 245, 248
Rupel, 93, 103

SAI valley, 155
Sailkalla nullah, 43, 121

Sanatta, 271
Sangalli Weon, the legend of, 101, 102
Sanjara, 32, 211
Sanjok Lhassa, 143
Sansuma, 260, 266
Seesee, 271
Sekunder Nameh, 302
Sekunder, Sultan, 199, 201, 206, 207, 209
Sekunderabad, 211, 213
Shah Mirza, 171
Shalimar, 6, 292
Shamshaberi, 11, 17, 18, 41, 44, 47, 121, 128, 130, 131
Shamsher, 157; legend of, 184–191; song of, 190, 191
Shandur Pass, 165
Shankargarh, 141
Shapo. *See* Urial
Shawaran, 164
Sheltar nullah, 111, 124
Shignan, 217
Shingai Gah, 163
Shingo River, 128, 244
Shingshal nullah, 142, 210, 224, 233
Shiridup, 96
Shishanag, 7
Shri Badat, 178, 179, 184, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191. *See also* Adam Khor
Shyok River, 108
Siddartha, 205
Simla, 144
Sind, 12, 240, 241, 242, 243, 286
Singh Kand, 60
Sirikol, 232
Sirikun, 162
Skardu, 108, 109, 110, 111, 141, 171, 184, 193, 244, 245
Snake worship in Kashmir, 6
Snipe, 261; shooting, 285–290
Snow leopard, 249, 250, 253, 254, 255
Soglio, legend of, 178–183, 206
Sonamarg, 240
Soni, 162, 164, 165, 168, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191
Sonikote, 168
Spandra, 234, 237
Spandrin, 234
Srinagar, 5, 92, 239, 280, 281, 286, 292
Suliman markhor, 117
Sumair, 213
Su Malik, legend of, 192–198
Suru, 12
Sussaini, 231
Swat, 91, 97, 206, 271

Tabalgoh wood, 115
Takht-i-Suliman, 5
Tajik Moghul, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197
Taleno, 190
Tambuk, 173, 175
Tangir, 97
Tapkianz, 217
Tashkurgan, 97
Taxila, 271
Teetwal, 128
Thol, 213
Tilel, 41
Toiki in Gilgiti polo, 159
Tootmari, 9
Tor, 142
Trakhan, 157, 162, 163, 164, 165, 210, 216, 221, 225, 234
Tral, 11, 27
Trangphalio, the story of, 111–116
Trangphas, 183, 231
Tromba, 221
Trout fishing in Kashmir, 257–269; also 312

Urial, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 148, 151, 152, 153, 157
Ursus Isabellinus, 27, 39, 41. *See* Bears
Ursus Torquatus, 22, 23, 31, 35, 39, 41. *See* Bears
Usafzai, 206

Veshinag, 7

Wagé Saggan, 18, 243
Wakhan, 197, 217, 234, 235
Wardwan, 311
Water of Life, the wells of the, 101, 201, 202, 203, 204
Wedding songs, 194
Wiyo, 180
Wular Lake, 89, 286
Wyhama, 43, 44
Wysa, 39

Yaghistan, 170, 175
Yarkand, 92
Yasin, 142, 165, 179, 192, 193, 274

Zaharmora, 121, 122, 123, 126, 127
Zainudin Walli, legend of, 14–16, 205
Zaitus, 182
Zandreshan, 44
Ziarat, 236
Zojila, 5, 18, 240, 242
Zulimat-i-ab-i-Hiyat, 201, 202, 204

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